Hafa Adai!

CPA looks at FY 2024 budget; lays concerns about source markets. PAGE 2
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Commerce director's businesses BOOSTed

A joint committee of the Ways and Means Committee and Judiciary and Governmental Operations holds a meeting at the House of Representatives chamber yesterday.
KIMBERLY BAUTISTA

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Jesus Taisague, who is the Economic Development director at the Department of Commerce, testified before a joint committee of the House of Representatives yesterday that he indirectly benefited from the Building Optimism, Opportunities, and Stability Together, or BOOST, program, with businesses he partly owns receiving over $1.2 million.

Taisague, who also served as a member of the BOOST program review panel, took the hot seat yesterday afternoon to testify about his involvement in the BOOST program and, following intense grilling by

See COMMERCE on Page 4

Ex-firefighters now suing ex-Finance chief

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The nine former firefighters who were terminated for refusing to be vaccinated against COVID-19 are now suing ex-Finance secretary David Atalig over premium pay that they didn't receive.

According to the complaint for injunctive relief filed by the nine former firefighters, they asked the Superior Court to order the former Finance secretary to approve and disburse $5,000 in premium pay

See CHIEF on Page 4

Western NY death toll rises to 28 from cold, storm chaos

This photo provided by the Twitter page of New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, snow from this weekends blizzard covers downtown Buffalo on Monday, Dec. 26, 2022.

By CAROLYN THOMPSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)— Buffalo residents hovered around space heaters, hunted for cars buried in snow drifts and looked for more victims Monday, after 28 people died

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INSIDE

BUSINESS
Hafabean, which opened last Aug. 26, is a one-stop shop for coffee and smiles.

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GOOD HOUSEKEEPING
While the excitement of buying a house is great, the task of furnishing it may be overwhelming.

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LIFE & STYLE
Tennis great Boris Becker recounts the moment the door of his prison closed for the first time.

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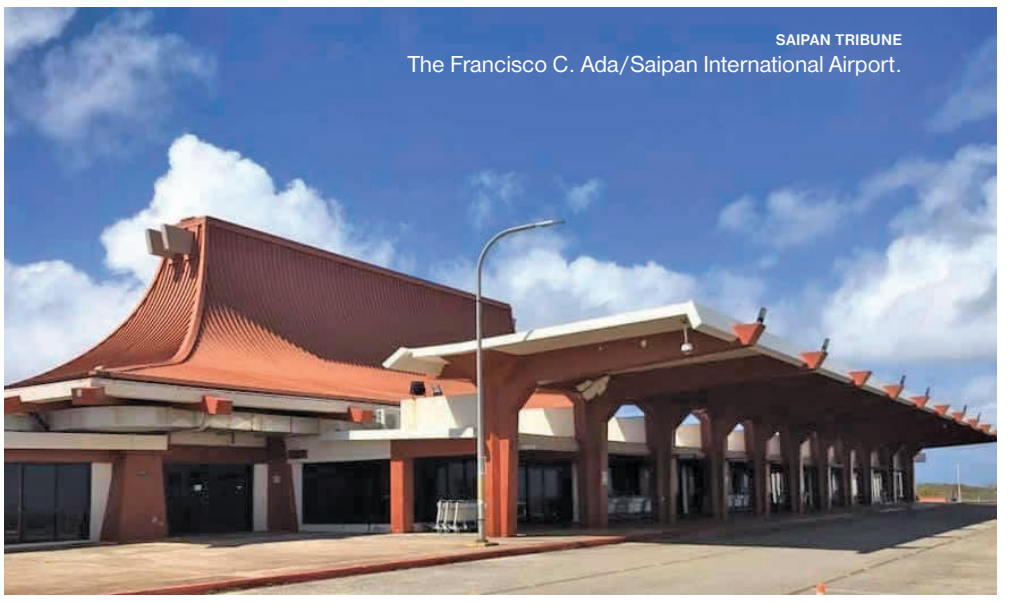
SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

CPA looks at FY 2024 budget; lays concerns about source markets

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER


SAIPAN TRIBUNE
The Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority is looking into what a fiscal year 2024 budget will look like based on the conditions of flights and the present available markets.

Currently, Asiana Airlines flights are twice a week and are scheduled up to March 2023. T'Way Air, whose flights come in four times a week, is only scheduled up to January 2023, while Jeju Air and United Airlines come in daily.

According to CPA board chair Kimberlyn King-Hinds after their board meeting last Thursday, she said if [Asiana and T'Way airlines stop services and do not continue past what they have submitted in terms of schedule, "then we have to go back and start looking at our numbers and looking at the budget and making the necessary adjustments."

Even with the current flights coming in, it is not sufficient as CPA's operations are largely supported by the American Rescue Plan Act funds. CPA received $2.2 million in August 2021 and will have exhausted it by the end of this fiscal year.

The $2.2 million allocated to CPA through the central government was required to be used specifically for the restoration of employees' work hours from August 2021 through fiscal year 2023 and to bring CPA to full operational capacity, said a CPA press release from August 2021.

A budget spreadsheet provided by King-Hinds shows that the FY 2023 budget of CPA's airports is $6.75 million, while the total operation and personnel costs is $14 million. Some $6.26 million is for personnel costs, while $7.78 million is for operations and maintenance.

"So, if we were to look at a budget for next year, and [there are] no new entrants to the market, or we don't see an increase in flights coming in, there's some serious concerns about our ability to maintain our operation if we did not have any additional flights or supplemental funding outside of the revenues that we are generating, to be able to continue to maintain our operations at a higher rate than we do now," said King-Hinds.

At the same time, while CPA is looking at the forecast for next fiscal year, they are also "tightening the belt" for the remainder of the fiscal year in anticipation that Asiana and T'Way airlines will potentially not continue services past the dates that they are currently scheduled for.

King-Hinds recollected that pre-pandemic, the CNMI had three source markets—Japan, Korea, and China—but right now, it's just Japan and Korea. But that, "even if we were to go back to the level in terms of the number of arrivals from Japan and Korea pre-pandemic, if we don't get the China market back online, we will not be generating the revenue and be at the level that we were generating pre-pandemic."

These are the factors that CPA is in discussion about how they can start planning and preparing to continue to be self-sustainable and maintain operations moving forward.

With the Marianas Visitors Authority looking at the China market maybe resuming in the spring or summer of 2023, King-Hinds said it would definitely help, because there is currently nothing from it.

"If that market comes back online, then that's a boost and is very welcome and much needed at this point in time. …We're hopeful that they are tired of being locked down and that they're looking to come and vacation and have some fun in the sun in the Marianas."

Again, King-Hinds said that CPA has to plan for the best- and worst-case scenarios, along with having contingencies in terms of what would be an appropriate level of funding that is required to ensure that CPA is able to provide services, as well as pay the bills.

"It's all kind of like a work-in-progress. We have to be very cautious with how we spend the money. We have to start planning for different scenarios: One, which includes them coming back online, one which does not. If we're looking at them coming in summer of 2023, then that's still within this fiscal year so, hopefully, we can make up for whatever shortfall as a result. So let's say for example, Asiana stays offline for a little bit until… Hopefully, we get the China market to make up for that. But you know, those are all obviously not guaranteed."

CPA operates the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport/Rota International Airport on Rota, and the Tinian International Airport, as well as all CNMI seaports.

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CUC to clear vegetation from Saipan residential power lines

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. is entering laterals or residential areas around Saipan to clear power lines of vegetations.

Vegetation is one of the major factors for power outages on Saipan and can be extremely hazardous when coming in contact with energized power lines. People and animals are at risk of electrocution when coming in contact with a tree or vine that is in direct contact with an energized power line.

Circuit Feeder	Areas Included	Expected Clearing Timeframe
Feeder 4	Lower Base through Sadog Tasi, Capital Hill, Talafofo, I-Denni, As Teo, Papago and Kagman	Sixteen (16) Weeks
Kiya 1	Papago through San Vicente, Dandan, Obyan, Airport Road, Eastern As Perdido, Kannat Tabla, Fina Sisu and As Terlaje	Ten (10) Weeks
Kiya 2	As Lito through Southern Fina Sisu, Western As Perdido, Koblerville, San Antonio and Chalan Piao	Seven (7) Weeks
Kiya 4	Chalan Kanoa through Susupe and Oleai	Two (2) Weeks
Kiya 3	Chalan Laolao through Gualo Rai, China Town, and Beach Road	Six (6) Weeks
Feeder 1,2,7	Navy Hill, Puerto Rico, Beach Road Garapan through Smiling Cove to Lower Base, Tanapag, San Roque, As Matuis and Marpi	Ten (10) Weeks

CUC would greatly appreciate the assistance of the public to mark trees within their properties. Smaller vegetation such as bushes, miniature flame trees and banana trees that are not expected to reach the primary power lines will not be cut down and will only trimmed if within the 15 feet range unless the property owner or tenant provides permission to do so.

CUC will be working in collaboration with the mayor's office to perform the debris pick-up and disposal. For any questions or concerns please visit https://cnmilaw.org/pdf/public laws/14/p114- 12.pdf or contact CUC customer service at (670) 664-4282. ***(PR)***

Public warned of seas dangerous to small craft

A small craft advisory remains in effect in Saipan, Tinian, and Rota coastal waters until 6am Monday.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, northeast winds of 15 to 25 knots with gusts of up to 30 knots and seas of 8 to 11 feet are occurring in Marianas waters until 6am Friday. Conditions will be hazardous to small craft.

A building northeast to east swell and breezy winds will bring hazardous seas for all coastal waters of the Marianas throughout the weekend.

A small craft advisory means that wind speeds of 21 to 33 knots are expected to produce wave conditions hazardous to small craft.

Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid boating in hazardous conditions. ***(PR)***

Viray Enterprises sues USCIS for adjudication of denied petition

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Viray Enterprises Inc. is suing U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the Department of Homeland Security in the U.S. District Court for the NMI for denying the CW-1 petition for one of its employees after claiming that Viray Enterprises is not a legitimate business.

Viray Enterprise, as relief, wants the court to issue declaratory and injunctive relief under the Administrative Procedure Act, setting aside the USCIS denial, and to direct the defendants to grant the CW-1 petition and extend the authorized stay of the employee.

In addition, the plaintiff wants the court to review the decision of USCIS and have the CW-1 petition adjudicated.

According to the lawsuit, Viray Enterprises filed its timely renewal petition on behalf of one of its workers on July 26, 2021. USCIS issued a request for evidence or RFE on Sept. 2, 2021. The plaintiff then submitted a timely response to the RFE on Nov. 1, 2021. On Jan. 27, 2022, USCIS California Service Center denied the CW-1 petition. On the same date, USCIS denied the worker's extension of authorized stay.

The lawsuit stated that the basis for denial was that Viray Enterprises is not a "legitimate business" on grounds that it failed the requirement of being an E-Verify participant in good standing. The plaintiff, in its response to the RFE, included a copy of its E-Verify registration confirmation. However, according to USCIS, the company's evidence was not valid.

"Although you provided an active E-Verify Company Identification Number in response to our request, this evidence was not valid at the time the current petition was filed," the lawsuit stated

Viray Enterprises claims

See VIRAY on Next Page

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ATTORNEY FOR Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

PUSHADEVI M. HEMLANI, Plaintiff,
-v-
JAMES D. CABRERA, FEIAN CHEN, and WENJUE YIN, Defendants.

CIVIL ACTION NO. 22-0198-CV

SUMMONS

TO THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANTS:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is given you herewith, within twenty-one (21) days after service of this Summons upon you, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to THE LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL A. WHITE, LLC, the Plaintiff's attorneys, whose address is Post Office Box 5222, Saipan, MP 96950, as soon as practicable after filing your answer or sending it to the Clerk of Courts for filing.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at Susupe, Saipan. It may be prepared and signed for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice.

If you fail to answer in accordance with this Summons, judgment by default may be taken against you for the relief demanded in the Complaint.

By order of the above Court:

/s/
Clerk of Court
Dated, this 31st day of August, 2022.

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STORM

From Page 1

in one of the worst weather-related disasters ever to hit western New York.

The rest of the United States also was reeling from the ferocious winter storm, with at least another two dozen deaths reported in other parts of the country.

Up to 9 more inches of snow (23 centimeters) could fall in some areas of western New York through Tuesday, the National Weather Service said.

"This is not the end yet," said Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz, calling the blizzard "the worst storm probably in our lifetime," even for an area accustomed to punishing snow.

Some people, he noted, were stranded in their cars for more than two days.

President Joe Biden said his prayers were with the victims' families, and offered federal assistance Monday to the hard-hit state.

Those who lost their lives around Buffalo were found in cars, homes and snowbanks. Some died while shoveling snow, others when emergency crews could not respond in time to medical crises.

Melissa Carrick, a doula, said the blizzard forced her to coach a pregnant client through childbirth by telephone. An ambulance crew transported the woman to a hospital about 45 minutes south of Buffalo because none of the closer hospitals were reachable.

"In any other normal Buffalo storm? I would just go because that's what you do – just drive through the snow," she said. "But you knew this was different."

Scientists say the climate change crisis may have contributed to the intensity of the storm. That's because the atmosphere can carry more water vapor, which acts as fuel, said Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Victor Gensini, a meteorology professor at Northern Illinois University, likened a single weather event to an "at-bat"—and the climate as your "batting average."

"It's hard to say," Serreze said. "But are the dice a little bit loaded now? Absolutely."

The blizzard roared across western New York Friday and Saturday. With many grocery stores in the Buffalo area closed and driving bans in place, some people pleaded on social media for donations of food and diapers.

"It was like looking at a white wall for 14 to 18 hours straight," Poloncarz, the county official, said.

Relief is coming later this week, as forecasts call for temperatures to slowly rise, said Ashton Robinson Cook, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

Cook said the bomb cyclone—when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in a strong storm—has weakened. It developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions including heavy winds and snow.

Some 3,410 domestic and international flights were canceled Monday as of about 3 p.m. EDT, according to the tracking site FlightAware. The site said Southwest Airlines had 2,497 cancellations—about 60% of its scheduled flights and about 10 times as many as any other major U.S. carrier.

Southwest said the weather was improving, which would "stabilize and improve our situation."

Based on FlightAware data, airports all across the U.S. were suffering from cancellations and delays, including Denver, Atlanta, Las Vegas, Seattle, Baltimore and Chicago.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul toured the aftermath in Buffalo—her hometown—on Monday, calling the blizzard "one for the ages." Almost every fire truck in the city became stranded Saturday, she said.

Hochul noted the storm came a little over a month after the region was inundated with another "historic" snowfall. Between the two storms, snowfall totals are not far off from the 95.4 inches (242 centimeters) the area normally sees in an entire winter season.

The National Weather Service said the snow total at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport stood at 49.2 inches (1.25 meters) at 10 a.m. Monday. Officials say the airport will be shut through Wednesday morning.

Shahida Muhammad told WKBW that an outage knocked out power to her 1-year-old son's ventilator. She and the child's father manually administered breaths from Friday until Sunday when rescuers saw her desperate social media posts and came to their aid. She said her son was doing well despite the ordeal and described him as "a fighter."

In a makeshift hut in her living room, Trisha LoGrasso was still huddled around a space heater Monday with three of her children and her eldest daughter's boyfriend. The temperature inside her Buffalo home was 42 degrees (5.5 C). She was without heat because of a gas leak, and burst pipes left her with no running water.

"I've lived here my whole life, and this is the worst storm I've ever seen," the 48-year-old said.

Melissa Osmon and her husband James were without power for more than 72 hours in the Buffalo suburb of Williamsville, and would retreat to their car to stay warm for hours at a time.

"We even watched the Buffalo Bills game on our phone," Osmon said, speaking by phone from her GMC Acadia.

"You can see your breath inside the house," she said. "That's how cold it is."

The storm knocked out power in communities from Maine to Seattle.

Storm-related deaths were reported practically nationwide, including at least eight killed in crashes in Missouri, Kansas and Kentucky. A woman fell through Wisconsin river ice, and there was a fatal fire at a Kansas homeless persons camp.

In Jackson, Mississippi, crews struggled Monday to get water through the capital city's beleaguered water system, authorities said. Many areas had no water or low water pressure. On Christmas Day, residents were told to boil their drinking water due to water lines bursting in the frigid temperatures.

"The issue has to be significant leaks in the system that we have yet to identify," the city said in a statement Monday.

DEREK GEE/THE BUFFALO NEWS VIA AP

Tommy Roetzer digs out his driveway on West Delavan Street in Buffalo, N.Y., on Monday, Dec. 26, 2022.

CHIEF

From Page 1

to each of them.

The nine firefighters are Paul T. Acebedo, Jose K. Angui, Allen T. Calvo, Cain C. Castro, Argernon A. Flores, Derek B. Gersonde, Shawn DLR Kaipat, Philip Kalen, and Adam J. Safer, who filed the suit through attorney Joseph Horey.

The terminated firefighters are alleging denial of equal protection of the laws and deprivation of civil rights under the U.S. Constitution.

According to the lawsuit, on or about Dec. 29, 2021, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres announced that the Department of Finance would release $5,000 premium pay for each CNMI government employee who had worked at least 40 hours to directly mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services employees, the plaintiffs said they had worked at least 40 hours to directly mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each of the plaintiffs submitted their respective applications for premium pay to the Department of Finance. However, they claim that, although each of them met all the qualifications for premium pay in the amount of $5,000, Atalig only approved $1,000 in premium pay for each of them, rather than the full $5,000.

"Upon information and belief, the reason that plaintiffs were paid less than full premium pay was that they had been terminated from their government employment on or about May 21, 2021, after they had already performed the amount of direct pandemic mitigation work required to qualify for full premium payment," Horey said.

The former firefighters were terminated for insubordination following their refusal to take the COVID-19 vaccine as required by the CNMI Governor's Directive 2021-002 issued on Feb. 18, 2021.

On Aug. 3, 2022, the Civil Service Commission denied the former firefighters' appeal and affirmed the fire department's decision to terminate them.

They have since re-filed their lawsuit to request the court to reinstate them as firefighters. The suit remains pending in Superior Court

COMMERCE

From Page 1

the joint committee, it was learned that outside of his role as Commerce director, he also has a stake on a number of small businesses in the CNMI.

Some of the businesses Taisague partly owns is the Flower Tea House, Saipan Goddess, Saipan Horse Course, Sakura, and Love Birds restaurant.

According to the BOOST program ledger that named all the BOOST awardees, all five businesses received a large portion of the over $10 million BOOST program allocation—about 11%.

Flower Tea House received $325,000, Saipan Goddess received $125,000, Saipan Horse Course received $200,000, Sakura Group received $50,000, and Love Birds Restaurant received two grants, one for $125,000, and another for $100,000. In addition, the companies were the very first to receive their grant awards.

The Commerce director claims he was not involved in the review process for his company's applications as he had "recused" himself.

However, when asked for proof that he had recused himself, like a signed document or even minutes of a panel meeting, Taisague was unable to provide one.

Taisague, who appeared before the joint committee without a lawyer, appeared flustered when committee members questioned him about the owners of the businesses and his relationship with them. Taisague went as far as to plead his Fifth Amendment right (protection against self-incrimination) to not answer those questions, nearly landing him in contempt of his subpoena.

When Rep. Christina Sablan (D-Saipan) asked Taisague whether or not he had at least left the room when the panel was reviewing his company's application, he respond that he couldn't answer that and that he recused himself.

Meanwhile, Rep. Joel Camacho (R-Saipan) said that he can hardly believe that it was a coincidence that all the companies Taisague had a stake on were granted BOOST awards, some even as high as 40% of their requested amount.

Taisague is set to return before the committee today to continue to testify in his involvement in the BOOST grant program.

VIRAY

From Page 3

that USCIS arbitrarily refused to accept the company as a "legitimate business" despite a sterling record of a decade of employing CW-1 workers.

On March 3, 2022, the plaintiff filed a timely motion to reopen and reconsider the denial with a form I-290B. On Nov. 3, 2022, USCIS California Service Center denied the motion.

"The denial was based on an insistence, without any meaningful analysis, discussion or consideration, that the motion did not meet the requirements for a motion for reconsideration," the lawsuit stated.

Guam officials mourn passing of Hattori-Uchima

University of Guam officials issued the following statements about the untimely passing of Dr. Margaret Hattori-Uchima, the dean of the UOG School of Health, who died during a paddleboarding incident on Monday when she was pulled over the reef in rough surf.

From University of Guam president Thomas W. Krise:

"We are heartbroken by this overwhelming loss, and our thoughts and prayers are with Dr. Margaret's family, loved ones, and her colleagues at the School of Health and across our University. A bright light of our community has gone dark, and we are devastated to lose such a vibrant spirit way before her time. Her dedication, compassion, kindness, and understanding will inspire us all forevermore."

From Anita Borja Enriquez, senior vice president and provost:

Hattori-Uchima

"We are devastated by the passing of Dean Margaret. She was a champion for supporting disadvantaged and underserved populations and for advancing the nursing profession and health care on island and throughout the region. She will be dearly missed. Our deepest condolences and love to her family."

As a registered nurse for 35 years, a faculty member at UOG since August 2001, and the dean of the School of Health since 2014, Hattori-Uchima exemplified what it means to be a Triton and displayed true leadership in her service. She has been an advocate for improving the quality of health care in the region and has provided leadership in the study and alleviation of health disparities. She also served for more than a decade with the Guam Homeless Coalition.

Speaker Therese Terlaje also issued the following statement on behalf of the 36th Guam Legislature:

"Our island mourns the tragic loss of Dr. Margaret Hattori-Uchima, dean of the University of Guam School of Health and registered nurse for 34 years. Dr. Hattori has also been an educator for 23 years, facilitating and advancing educational opportunities in her profession for Guam's nurses and social workers for decades," stated Terlaje.

Hattori-Uchima has been recognized with such accolades as the 2019 Nurse of the Year from the Guam Nurses Association, American Academy of Nursing 2020 Class of Fellows as the first fellow from Guam, 2021 COVID Hero recognized by KUAM, and the 2022 Public Citizen Award from the National Association of Social Workers Guam Chapter, where she was honored with a resolution from the 36th Guam Legislature.

"Dr. Hattori-Uchima was in a category of exceptional women of Guam, whose tireless commitment to advancing public health and welfare made a difference in so many lives, most especially our patients. She was a visionary and a catalyst for change. As the chairperson for the Legislature's Committee on Health, I trusted Dr. Hattori-Uchima's institutional knowledge to improve the quality of healthcare on Guam and to ensure we remove all impediments to growing our local workforce and meeting Guam's critical need for highly skilled nurses, social workers, nurse assistants, and other healthcare professionals," stated Terlaje.

As a dedicated professional, Hattori-Uchima set a high bar for her contributions in advancing healthcare and public welfare including advocating for disadvantaged communities on Guam and in the region, commitment to the homeless as a long-time member of the Guam Homeless Coalition, and work with the Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program and the Pacific Island Partnership for Cancer Health Equity.

"On behalf of the 36th Guam Legislature, our heartfelt condolences and prayers go out to Dr. Hattori-Uchima's family, students, friends and close associates." ***(Saipan Tribune)***

Free webinars on government contracting

The Guam Procurement Technical Assistance Center is offering free webinars in January.

Webinars are held every Wednesday from 10am to 11:30am via Zoom. Zoom links are emailed to all registered attendees 30 minutes before the webinar.

■ Dec. 28, 2022 – Gov-Guam Procurement – The Guam PTAC will explain Government of Guam Procurement, where to find opportunities, and how to submit bids.

■ Jan. 4, 2023 – How to Register in SAM – The Guam PTAC will take you through the new Entity Validation process, the actual SAM registration, follow-up requirements, and the new annual renewal process.

■ Jan. 11, 2023 – Teaming & JVs – The Guam PTAC will discuss the Federal regulations related to these arrangements and discuss ways to use these arrangements effectively.

■ Jan. 18, 2023 – SBA Mentor-Protégé Program – The Guam PTAC will update you on the eligibility requirements, the application process, and follow-up requirements.

■ Jan. 25, 2023 – SBIR/STTR Programs – These programs encourage inventors and innovators to engage in Federal Research and Development that has the potential for commercialization. The Guam PTAC will explain the programs and show how you can get started.

Register for free here: https://www.guamptac.com/news-and-events.php ***(PR)***

CHRISTMAS DONATION CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Just in time for the holidays, Paradise Realty Saipan and Juan Mako Torres Properties donate $2,500 to Karidat Social Services. Photo shows, from left, Mario Espeleta, case manager; Jesse Torres, Paradise Realty broker, and Calvani Deleon Guerrero, case manager, turning over the check yesterday at the Karidat Social Services office.

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: nmhc@nmhc.gov.mp Website: http://www.nmhcgov.net

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
(THIS IS AD IS PAID FOR NMHC WITH HUD FUNDS)

AMENDMENT No. 1:

NMHC RFP 2023-001

SEALED PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DATE & TIME: January 13, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

Architect-Engineer Services for the Construction of New Classroom Buildings for the Northern Marianas College (NMC)

The Request for Proposals and Scope of Work are available on December 13, 2022, at the NMHC website at www.nmhcgov.net and at www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com by clicking on the "Procurement Tab".

Inquiries regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing or email to Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer at officemanager@nmhcgov.net or submitted by facsimile to (670)234-9021 no later than 9:00 a.m. local time on December 28, 2022.

This procurement is in accordance with the NMHC Procurement Regulations. Proposal procedures shall be in full compliance with NMIAC §§ 100-60-210 (Competitive Sealed Proposal) and 100-60-305 (Architect-Engineer Services) of the NMHC Procurement Regulations. The provisions of the NMHC Procurement regulations, NMIAC 100-60-725 AND 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent Fees shall apply.

Mandatory Pre-proposal Conference will be held at the ~~NMHC Central Office Conference Room, Garapan, Saipan,~~ ***NMHC CDBG-DR Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Ladera Building, Beach Road, Saipan on December 28, 2022, 10 a.m. local time.*** Failure to attend the Mandatory Pre-proposal conference will be considered a non-responsive offeror.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer, at (670)234- 6866/9447 or email at officemanager@nmhcgov.net during regular business hours, 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/
Jesse S. Palacios
Corporate Director
Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC)

/s/
Merced "Marcie" M. Tomokane
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: DPW23-ITB NO.: 42300016

SUBMISSION DATE: January 17, 2023 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Renovation of the Secretary of Finance Office Building Number 1302, Saipan"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

The project package will be available on or after December 14, 2022 at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan.

A non-refundable payment of **One Hundred Dollars ($100.00)** is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Treasurer and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at DPW Technical Services Division required for each set.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **January 03, 2023**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the Department of Public Works Conference Room 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center **Office**, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **January 10, 2023** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ JAMES A. ADA
SECRETARY, DPW

/S/ DAVID DLG. ATALIG
SECRETARY OF FINANCE

/S/ FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR, PROCUREMENT SERVICES

MICHAEL A. WHITE, ESQ., F0122
THE LAW OFFICES OF MICHAEL A. WHITE, LLC
POST OFFICE BOX 5222
SAIPAN, MARIANA ISLANDS 96950
TEL: (670) 234-6547 | FAX: (670) 234-9537
EMAIL: mwhite@saipan.com

ATTORNEY FOR Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING, Plaintiff, -v- RAMON S. DELA CRUZ and REBECCA C. DELA CRUZ, Defendants. • CIVIL ACTION NO. 18-0410

NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to an Order issued by the Court in this matter on October 14, 2022, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth hereinbelow, all of the right, title, and interest of Defendant in and to the following property:

Legal description of the property:

Lot no. 001 G 74, containing an area of 729 square meters, more or less, as more particularly described on Drawing/Cadastral Plat no. 001 G 03, the original of which was recorded 20 March 1986 as Document no. 86-0510 at the Commonwealth Recorder's Office, Saipan.

Total area of the property:
729 square meters

Known encumbrances:

A mortgage in favor of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation.

Date, Time, and Places of Sale. The sale will be held on Friday, January 27, 2023, at the hour of 1:30 p.m., at The Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC, Joeten Center, Susupe, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public. A copy of the title insurance report for the property is available to any prospective bidder upon request. A copy of the mortgage in favor of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, a plat map showing the boundaries of the above-described property, a map of the property's location in Saipan, a copy of this Notice, and a copy of the Court's Order of October 14, 2022, are available for inspection and copying at the offices of the undersigned. Prospective bidders can view and inspect the property at any time during normal business hours. The sale may be postponed by the undersigned at any time.

Terms of Conditions of the Sale. The Terms and Conditions of Sale may be obtained from the undersigned, either prior to or at the sale. These terms and conditions shall govern the conduct of the sale.

Additional Terms and Conditions. A deposit of 10% of the successful bid is payable to the undersigned by the close of business of the date of sale, and the balance of the successful bid is to be paid within three (3) working days thereafter. The purchase price will be held in escrow pending approval of the sale by the Court. The sale is subject to the Court's approval. Upon approval by the Court, a Certificate of Sale will be issued to the successful purchaser upon satisfying the terms of payment. The sale is also subject to statutory redemption rights for 12 months following the date of sale. If the property is not redeemed during the redemption period, a Quitclaim Deed will issue, conveying title to the purchaser.

DATED, this 9th day of December, 2022.

/s/
MICHAEL A. WHITE, Auctioneer

USCG leverages aviation workhorse to overcome challenges in cutter logistics

SANTA RITA, Guam — Guam is home to three 154-foot fast response cutters commissioned in 2021. These ships are built in Lockport, Louisiana. After initial work-ups, they sailed from Key West through the Panama Canal, more than 10,000 miles to Guam. In the time since the crews have stayed busy conducting the U.S. Coast Guard's core missions in Micronesia and supporting our Blue Pacific partners.

The operations area

For many of the Nation's fast response cutters, the transit to homeport from Key West is one of the most extended trips they make. Those stateside remain close to most essential services needed to maintain the vessels, designed to operate within 200 nautical miles of homeport. In the case of the Guam-based fleet, they routinely go more than 200 nautical miles to get to the operations area. U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam has one of the largest areas of responsibility of any sector at 1.9 million square miles. Like its other overseas counterparts, the region can be austere and presents unique challenges.

U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam differs. The USCGC *Oliver Henry* (WPC 1140) undertook a more than 6,000-mile expeditionary patrol south through Oceania with inaugural FRC port calls in Papua New Guinea and Australia. Their sister ship, the USCGC Frederick Hatch (WPC 1143), just concluded a similar patrol in support of Operations Rematau and Blue Pacific, the southeast of Guam. The patrol countered illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing off the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Nauru by enforcing regulatory schemes and individual countries' sovereignty while strengthening partnerships through shiprider operations, subject matter exchanges, and community engagements.

"What often goes unsaid is the logistics piece enabling the operations," said Chief Warrant Officer Manny Pangelinan, engineering officer for CGFM/SG. The *Oliver Henry* required a last-minute shipment of fuel injectors while underway, a package coordinated by the CGFM/SG logistics department with some support from the Surface Force Logistics Center in Baltimore. The package was shipped via a commercial carrier and met them in Australia.

But more oversized items and hazardous materials can present a more complex challenge. Guam is a strategic location, and as a U.S. territory, it is the first line of defense against regional competitors. Logistically, it is remote and depends on maritime cargo for most items. Nearly 90% of imports come through the Port of Guam, and travel by sea varies in cost and takes time. Commercial air freight requires less time but can be very expensive.

The logistics challenge

Each FRC has four bottles of compressed gas onboard as part of the fire suppression system. The current design of the FRCs uses FN200 powder and nitrogen gas. Over time these bottles lose nitrogen and need to be recharged, the same as any fire extinguisher. If an extinguisher or system loses its prime, it may malfunction and not adequately suppress a fire. Stateside servicing this equipment is a simple endeavor, but service providers in Guam still need to be created. To further complicate matters, if a local provider converted existing equipment to service this system, it could only be used on FN200 to prevent cross-contamination. The U.S. Coast Guard is currently the only FN200 client on the island.

As the *Frederick Hatch* prepared for their patrol, the crew noted one of the four bottles was borderline between yellow and red on its pressure. No one wants to be over a thousand miles from shore, with a fire, and risk a system malfunction. But how do you get a 277-lb replacement bottle, considered a hazardous material, shipped from the mainland United States to the territory of Guam? And how do you do it in time to meet the ship's schedule and enable the crew to fulfill their mission requirements in Micronesia? You keep it in-house and leverage the naval aviation community.

Coast Guard aviation in Oceania

U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point in Hawaii conducts search and rescue, maritime domain awareness and surveillance, law enforcement, and cargo and transportation operations throughout Oceania. They are currently the only U.S. Coast Guard air station in the U.S. Coast Guard 14th District, with the next closest aviation unit in California. Still, from 1947 until 1972, they operated an air detachment in Guam known as Naval Air Station Agana to provide LORAN support for Western Pacific stations.

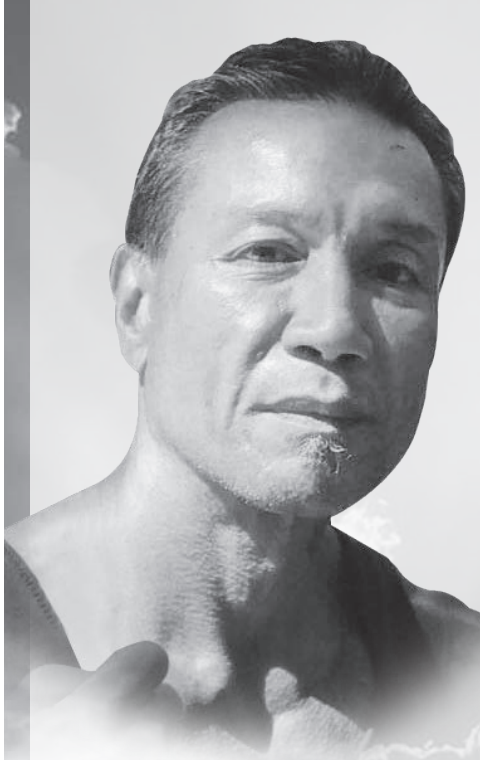
Today, the Barbers Point team operates four MH-65 Dolphin helicopters and four HC-130 Hercules airplanes. The Hercules airframes were recently upgraded from the H model to the J model. For

See COAST GUARD on Page 7

IN CELEBRATION OF HIS NEW LIFE

†Juan Masga Delos Santos

Lovingly Known as "Ku" or "John"
November 14, 1963 – November 25, 2022

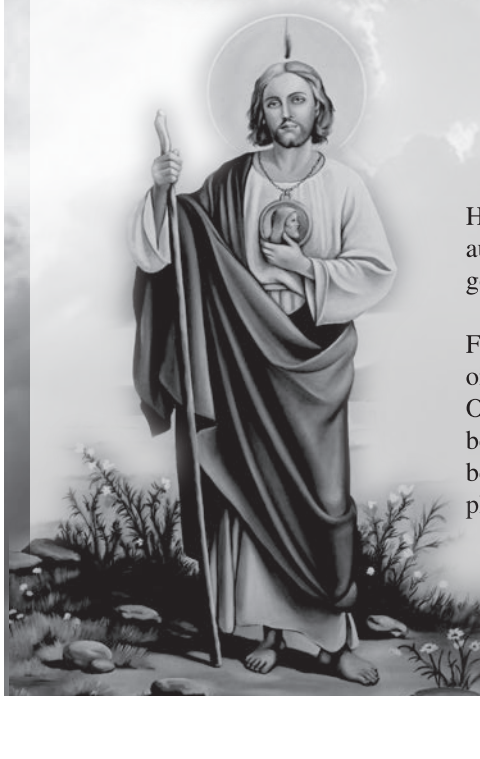


In his new life, he now joins his:
Mother: †Maria Masga Delos Santos
Brother: †Martin Juan Mafnas
Niece: †Vicky Jean Castro

His spirit, laughter, and memories will forever live in the hearts of his:
Father: Daniel Pangelinan Delos Santos
Minnie Martin Delos Santos

Children: Cherise C. Perez
John Daniel C. Delos Santos
Jovilyn C. Delos Santos

Sisters and Brothers:
Paula M. Delos Santos
Antonia M. Delos Santos
Priscilla M. Delos Santos
Anthony M. Delos Santos
Jerry M. Delos Santos
Daniel Jr. M. Delos Santos



He will be missed by numerous uncles, aunties, cousins, nieces, nephews, godchildren, relatives, and friends.

Funeral and memorial services will be held on January 3, 2023, at San Jose Church, Oleai. Responso and the last viewing will begin at 8 am. Mass of Christian burial will be celebrated at 10 am and Burial will take place at Chalan Kanoa Cemetery.

Un Dangkulu na Si Yu'us Ma'ase
The Family

UNITED STATES
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEETING

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 12, the CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities hereby gives notice that it will hold its 3rd Quarter General Membership Meeting on December 29, 2022, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Saipan World Resort – Sunflower Room.

AGENDA

I. Call to Order
II. Roll Call
III. Review & Adoption of the Agenda of December 29, 2022
IV. Review & Adoption of Meeting Minutes of July 20th and September 30th, 2022
V. Action Item
  a. Ratify the Approval of the Proposed FY 2023 DD Basic Grant Budget
  b. Ratify the Approval of the Proposed FY 2023 Assistive Technology Grant Budget
VI. Reports
  a. Chairman
  b. State Plan Committee Chairperson
  c. Fiscal Committee Chairperson
  d. Executive Director
VII. New Business
  a. Family Transition Symposium
  b. Meet Your Policymaker Event
  c. Champions of Equal Opportunity Award Ceremony Nominations
  d. March 2023 Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
VIII. Old Business
  a. Robert's Rules of Order Refresher
  b. 2022 NDEAM Update
IX. Miscellaneous
X. Next Meeting
XI. Adjournment

Note: Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 13(a) 7, the Council may vote to meet in Executive Session.
In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals who wish to attend this meeting and require special accommodations are requested to call the Council 5 days in advance at 664-7000. The Public is welcome to submit written or 3 minutes of oral comments regarding the agenda above.

/s/ **Concepcion Ulloa**
Chairperson

This ad is supported by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award total $274,744 with 100 percent funding by ACL/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACL/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

COAST GUARD

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Guam, this is significant. The J is more capable as a long-range surveillance aircraft providing heavy air transport and long-range maritime patrol capability. Each plane can serve as an on-scene command and control platform or as a surveillance platform with the means to detect, classify, and identify objects and share that information with operational forces. It also has "long legs." Where the H crews needed to stop for fuel en route to Guam from Hawaii, the J could make the trip in one leg if necessary. This advantage matters when time is of the essence, particularly in search and rescue cases.

Capt. John Rivers, CGAS Barbers Point commanding officer, recently visited Guam. He met with the CGFM/SG team to discuss options for more aviation support to Western and Central Pacific operations. Those ideas include more hours of Hercules activity in this region and possible use of the Dolphin helicopters outside Hawaii.

The workhorse

Regarding transporting equipment, the aircrew, particularly the loadmaster, has the final say on what goes aboard the plane. The Barbers Point team and the loadmaster were crucial to keeping the Frederick Hatch on schedule.

The team flew the HC-130 Hercules CG 2009 to Sacramento to pick up the shipment of fire bottles, then returned to Hawaii to rest and refuel. Subsequently, they flew to Majuro and landed in Guam on Nov. 9 at the A.B. Won Pat Guam International Airport. The CGFM/SG engineering team and environmental contractors met them to further transport the bottles to the pier.

All told, the movement cost flight hours and personnel time—but that is the nature of logistics. Per Commandant Instruction 7310.1V Reimbursable Standard Rates, the inside government rate for an HC-130J is $19,782 per hour. This includes direct costs like labor, employee benefits, fuel, maintenance, etc.; support costs: Costs allocated to a particular asset class for the support received from Coast Guard support activities, including but not limited to area commands, districts, sectors, sector field offices, bases, etc.; and general and administrative: Costs allocated to a particular asset class to represent benefit received from Coast Guard general and administrative activities such as legal services, payroll processing, etc.

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER SARA MUIR
A U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point HC-130J Hercules aircrew stands for a photo with the U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam engineering officer after transporting FN200 fire suppression bottles to Guam on Nov. 9, 2022. The aircrew provided support when commercial methods would preclude one of the Guam-based fast response cutters from getting underway in time for a scheduled patrol.

However, our aircrews make the most out of every flight, coupling logistics with other missions and training whenever possible. Flight crews must also fly a certain number of monthly hours to maintain currency and proficiency.

The personnel hours, in this case, include the coordination and research by the CGFM/SG Engineering Team to enable the technician from the fire services company to come out, install and certify the new bottle. The team kept the cost down by more than $16,000 by flying out one technician instead of two and doing all the manual labor of removing and replacing the existing bottle with the ship's force. Transporting a 277-lb bottle across the pier, onto the cutter, and into the space with a tripod and chain fall in 90-degree heat with 90% humidity is quite an undertaking. According to Reimbursable Standard Rates, the inside government cost of a CWO2 is $79 per hour, a Chief Petty Officer is $71, and a Petty Officer 2nd Class is $55. Still, these personnel, like the aircrew, are salaried. The figures come into play if the Service seeks reimbursement from another branch or outside entity for services. The outside government rate is higher.

One might ask how to avoid this challenge in the future, as this won't be the last time these bottles need to be recharged. One possible alternative was building a facility to support the maintenance of these systems in Guam to the tune of more than a million dollars. Ultimately, this option was deemed unrealistic. Instead of a new facility, the engineering team procured a larger bottle of FN200 and equipment to be kept onsite to recharge the FRCs' systems. The team will do the heavy lifting and fly out a technician for the final assembly and certification. Two complete sets of bottles were procured at the same time. The first set came aboard the Hercules, and the second will come by cargo ship at a fee of just under $4,000. However, as of Christmas, the second set of bottles are still in transit and will take around 75 days total to arrive, emphasizing the importance of the Engineering Team's efforts and choices.

Forecast

"This team continues to deliver on the Commandant's mandate to be creative and innovative to craft solutions to the challenges we face as a service," said Capt. Nick Simmons, commander of CGFM/SG. "I am impressed by their commitment and resolve to consistently deliver superior engineering support, keeping us operational in a remote environment."

In the fiscal year 2022, the three Guam-based FRCs spent 324 days away from homeport, with 243 of those days physically underway conducting missions at sea. ***(USCG)***

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

JOB OPENING: ACCOUNTANT
EUCON INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

The Accountant, receiving general guidance from the school's Finance Manager: Is responsible for performing the operational functions of the school's accounting office in planning, organizing, and conducting all accounting operations and the school's administrative Internal Audit. The accountant ensures timely accounting reporting to the Finance Manager. The accountant adheres to accepted accounting principles and performs management and complex accounting duties with a high level of independence and professional discretion.

Must have a Bachelor of Science in Accountancy degree with at least five years of progressive work experience as an Accountant.

Work Location: Eucon International School, Kulales Place, Chalan Pale Arnold Road, Gualo Rai, Saipan.

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 500087, Saipan, MP 98950
E-Mail address: hr@eucon.edu

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT NO. 22-02
United States District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands

Case Administrator

Permanent, Full-Time Position - Location: SAIPAN, NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS (CNMI) Starting grade: CL-24 step 1 to CL 26 Step 25 ($44,553 to $67,769 which includes 12.45 % COLA) (Ultimate pay potential CL 26 ($67,769 - $88,137) by progressive performance and career salary progression)

Opening Date: December 19, 2022 • Applications received by January 3, 2023 will be given priority.

Position Overview:
This is a mid-to-full qualified operational court support position. The Case Administrator will review, process, and maintain records of court cases and handle the progression of cases to final disposition. Additional duties will be assigned as Relief Courtroom Deputy, and as Procurement Specialist. Other duties include cashiering, mail processing, customer service, scanning and copying documents, and organizing and shelving library materials. This position includes full federal employment benefits, with paid leave and holidays, health insurance, life insurance, and federal retirement benefits. Obtain a copy of the complete position description at https://www.nmid.uscourts.gov/employment

Minimum Qualifications and Preferred Qualifications:
High school graduate or equivalent, with at least two years of specialized work experience in applying recurring procedures and using specialized terminology that demonstrate the ability to apply a body of rules, regulations, directives, or laws, preferably in a court or related legal field. Education will not be substituted for required specialized work experience, but additional preference will be given for college graduation. Applicants should demonstrate sound ethics and judgment, be able to communicate effectively (orally and in writing) and have above-minimal skill in the use of office productivity software and online research skills. Additional preference will be given for skill in using automated case management systems.

Citizenship Requirement:
Applicants are required to be U.S. citizens or aliens who are authorized to work in the United States.

Notice to Applicants:
Excepted service appointments are "at will" and may be terminated by either the court or the employee at any time for any reason. Selectees may be subject to a background check or investigation and suitability determination; and may be subject to an updated background investigations every five years. Employees are subject to the Judicial Code of Conduct. Direct bank deposit of pay is required.

Application Procedure:
Each applicant is required to submit a Cover Letter, Resume, and an AO-78 application form. (Questions 18, 19, and 20 on page 5 of the AO-78 need not be answered.) AO-78 forms are at: https://www.uscourts.gov/forms/human-resources-forms/application-judicial-branch-federal-employment or may be picked up at the U.S. District Court. Position is open until filled; applications received by January 3, 2023 will be given priority.

We prefer you to email signed applications as a *single PDF file* to: HR@nmid.uscourts.gov

You may deliver signed applications to:
Clerk of Court
United States District Court
for the Northern Mariana Islands
3rd Floor, United States Courthouse, Gualo Rai, Saipan

The United States District Court is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Cleaner air, arriving soon by US mail

It's the time of year when we see a lot more mail trucks trundling through neighborhoods as letter carriers work hard to deliver everyone's holiday cards and packages on time.

But this season we have something new to celebrate: The U.S. Postal Service's announcement this week that it will spend billions of dollars to buy tens of thousands of electric delivery vehicles over the next few years. It's a victory in the fight against climate change and a welcome shift by an agency that until recently had intended to update its huge, aging fleet with another generation of gas guzzlers. It's also a win for public health, as a growing number of zero-emission mail trucks will soon start to deliver not only letters and packages, but cleaner air to every corner of the nation.

The Postal Service will buy 106,000 delivery vehicles by 2028, of which 66,000 will be electric, and plans to purchase zero-emission delivery trucks exclusively by 2026. The $9.6 billion plan is a dramatic change from earlier this year, when Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, who was appointed during the Trump administration, planned to make only 10% of the next-generation fleet electric and add as many as 165,000 new gas-guzzling delivery trucks over the next decade that get less than 9 miles per gallon. That would have been a huge mistake considering these vehicles last 30 years and could be on the roads polluting the air and warming the climate into the 2060s.

The Biden administration, which does not have direct control over the Postal Service, pushed back nonetheless. California, New York and more than a dozen other states filed suit in April to halt the purchase of gas-powered trucks, joining environmental groups in demanding investments in clean, zero-emission vehicles instead.

California's intervention "played a big part in stopping USPS from committing to decades of air pollution around the nation," said Liane Randolph, who chairs the state Air Resources Board.

While the Postal Service will need to do more to fully electrify its aging fleet of more than 220,000 vehicles, this move helps put us closer to achieving President Biden's climate goals, including an order he issued last year for the federal government to purchase only zero-emission vehicles by 2035, and to do so by 2027 for light-duty vehicles. The nation's largest vehicle fleet now has the potential to become its largest electric one too. Instead of lagging behind private-sector companies such as Amazon and FedEx, the Postal Service can help lead the way toward a zero-emission future.

Mail delivery trucks are especially well-suited for electrification because they run defined, local routes with low daily mileage and have hours of operation that allow them to be easily recharged. Because these vehicles serve virtually every community, electrifying them will bring widespread benefits, curbing air pollution while reducing fuel and maintenance costs and our dependence on oil.

It seems especially significant that something as ordinary and ubiquitous as the white mail truck will now help the nation blaze a trail toward a fossil-free future through every neighborhood in the country. And we won't have to wait for years either. The new vehicles are expected to go into service on postal routes in late 2023.

That's a gift we should all welcome this holiday season and enjoy for years to come.

©2022 Los Angeles Times

No.1,,, Please fix our border crisis!
No.2,,, Please fix our inflation problem!
NO 3,,, Don't let Biden and Trump run for President again!!!
HEY, I JUST WORK here! The last thing I want to do is talk politics!!!
©2022 JIMMY KING FOXXED SYNDICATE/NAS

Nancy Pelosi's indelible mark

By JACKIE CALMES
Los Angeles Times

Jackie Calmes is an opinion columnist for the Los Angeles Times *in Washington, D.C.*

On the Capitol's most historic man cave, as on much else, Nancy Pelosi has left her mark.

In her final weeks as the nation's first female House speaker, a reflective Pelosi has been hosting small groups in a ground-floor hideaway tucked in a narrow hall off the beaten path, between two well-traveled corridors. It's the Board of Education room — the name is an insiders' joke dating to Prohibition, when "Cactus Jack" Garner, the House speaker from Texas, retreated there with favored buddies for after-hours drinks. Another Texas speaker, Sam Rayburn, renewed the practice through the 1940s and 1950s; Vice President Harry Truman, a former senator, was in the Board of Education room when he got word that President Franklin Roosevelt had died.

It was men only, of course, because that pretty much described Congress in those decades: Women were 1% to 3% of the membership.

"They'd say they're going to the Education Committee, but of course it meant they were coming down here to play cards and enjoy whatever refreshments that they were enjoying," Pelosi told me and several other female journalists she'd invited for an alcohol-free lunch.

The history-maker revelled in the history of the room. Pelosi pointed to the state seal of Texas painted high on one wall — harking to her predecessors — and to a rendering of the pre-Civil War Capitol, without its later, larger dome, on the opposite wall. (Gone is a portrait of Robert E. Lee.) Then she turned to her additions: two fresco-like paintings, one of her hometown San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge and the other a scene of white-clad suffragettes marching outside the Capitol in 1919, when Congress passed the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote.

One can only imagine what Cactus Jack and Mr. Sam would think of this woman's touch in their old clubhouse. But over the 80-minute lunch, during which Pelosi did much of the talking, she made it plain she's been acting throughout her barrier-breaking career with little regard for what high-ranking men think.

Even now she says she feels occasional sexism: "A thousand nicks a day, even though people may not realize it or intend it." Looking back, Pelosi recalled scraps with both the male hierarchy of the Catholic Church — her church — over gay rights, abortion, contraception and in vitro fertilization ("Poor souls," she said), and with the men of the House, once resistant to her rise ("Poor babies").

It was a woman, San Francisco Rep. Sala Burton, who pushed Pelosi, then a fundraiser and organizer in Democratic politics and mother of five grown children, to run for the House. Burton was dying of cancer when she tapped Pelosi to take her seat: "A woman asking another woman, which was highly unusual," Pelosi said.

"I never intended to run for Congress. Never," she said, and added, "I never intended to run for leadership."

But as Pelosi worked to elect more women and raised gobs of California money for Democrats, women and some men urged her to run, first for minority whip, in 2001. There was, however, a pecking order in the male-dominated institution: "The guys said, 'Who said she could run?' "

She mimicked an exchange of the time:

"Why don't the women just make a list of the things they'd like to see done and give us the list?"

"Oh, really? Why don't you make a list?"

"Well, it's not the time [for a woman in the leadership]."

"No? We've been waiting over 200 years."

Still, she said, "I never thought that we would have a woman speaker. I thought, 'The country is so much more ready for a woman president than these guys are ready for a woman speaker.' "

When Pelosi arrived in Washington in 1987, the 435-member House included just 23 women, roughly split between the parties. "I would never have been speaker if there hadn't been many more women members," Pelosi said. Now the number is 122, three-fourths of them Democrats.

Among her most formidable challenges over two decades as House Democratic whip, leader and speaker: contending with the Catholic hierarchy. She counts as her "biggest disappointment, the closest I ever came to tears," the church's lobbying to kill the Affordable Care Act — the law Pelosi considers her most important achievement — because the bishops opposed its coverage for contraception.

She said she'd made her case to church emissaries "as a devout practicing Catholic," only to be told, "You're not that devout."

"Thank God for the nuns," Pelosi said, describing them as "fabulous," "aggressive" and "outspoken" in support of

See PELOSI on Page 9

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Ring in the new year with a rapid COVID test

By FAYE FLAM
Bloomberg Opinion

Faye Flam is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist covering science. She is host of the* Follow the Science *podcast.*

For many people, this holiday season feels like a return to 2019, with crowded stores, holiday parties and travel plans. But one COVID concession we should retain at the end of 2022—and well into 2023—is the use of rapid antigen tests, especially before attending large gatherings or meeting with people at high risk. Unlike more intrusive measures such as isolation and masking, tests are almost painless. And President Joe Biden's administration is now again offering four free tests to each household.

But there's still confusion around these tests—their strengths and weaknesses in different situations, whether they're just as accurate against the new variants (yes), and what benefit they can have to whole communities.

Yes, many people are tired of buying these tests and aggravated that testing positive can mean canceled plans or kids out of daycare. But one important reason to continue rapid-testing ourselves is to help diagnose people at high risk for severe disease as soon as possible—because the sooner they get the antiviral Paxlovid after developing symptoms, the better. Underuse of Paxlovid has been blamed for many of the ongoing COVID deaths.

Another reason to keep using them is that while rapid tests can miss some cases, testing right before a gathering can vastly decrease the odds of creating a super-spreader event.

That said, it's critical to know the tests' limitations. They're not perfect—and not nearly as sensitive PCR tests. But for many purposes, antigen tests are better because you get results in 10 or 15 minutes. PCR tests are more sensitive but still too slow.

"When your goal is to stop transmission, or to identify when you're infectious, PCR isn't the right tool," said Michael Mina, an epidemiologist at the biotech company eMed, which sells rapid tests.

Mina, who has been a big advocate of home testing since he was an assistant professor at the Harvard School of Public Health, says rapid tests are just as good at picking up the current variants as they were the variants of holiday seasons past. He estimates that rapid tests are better than 90% effective at preventing guests from getting infected and better than 90% effective for preventing your party from becoming a super-spreader event. That's because the rapid tests are pretty good at detecting people who are carrying what Mina calls "sky-high viral loads" of the kind that could spread to multiple other people. "Does it mean you won't turn positive tomorrow? No, but it means you're not highly infectious right then, and that's the most important thing."

Some people with very low levels of the virus might never test positive on a home test—but Mina maintains those people are the least likely to spread the virus to others at a gathering. Super-spreading events are more often triggered by people who develop a high viral load but little in the way of symptoms.

Newer at-home tests are now being sold for around $29 each, promising near-PCR accuracy within an hour. That's a good option for those with the resources, but there's no reason to let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Lots of suffering can be avoided through judicious use of the cheaper tests.

The biggest weakness of rapid tests is in the instructions, which fail to adequately inform people about when to test, why to test, or how to interpret the results. In a study published earlier this year, researchers found that people did worse using the enclosed instructions than they did with no instructions at all.

To use the test effectively, you have to take the test immediately before your event or gathering—not several days before, as some people still believe. Ideally, you'd take two tests—one a few days before, and another the morning of the event, especially if you were in contact with someone who was sick.

And if you're coughing or sniffling, it's always better to stay home, even if you test negative—because you might have flu or RSV, both of which are going around this season and can be dangerous to vulnerable people.

If you test positive, you should isolate. There's still a lot of confusion here, too. The CDC has issued different guidelines about how long to stay isolated after a positive COVID test—it went from 10 to 5 days without any change in scientific understanding. (The first day of symptoms or a positive test is considered Day 0.) "We find that 50% of people are still really infectious at Day 5," Mina said. "Around 20% of people are still infectious at about 10 days."

There has been some scientific disagreement about whether it's really OK to end isolation after five days. Most say it's OK, if you consistently wear a tight-fitting N95 mask. But there's little reliable protection from the kinds of loose-fitting cloth and surgical masks most people choose. And to make matters more complicated, exposure time matters—so on Day 8, say, you may be unlikely to infect someone at the supermarket but still able to infect someone you're sleeping next to for eight hours.

Mina recommends waiting till you get a negative test—though that can be more expensive, if you run out of the free ones. It wouldn't hurt for the Biden administration to let families have more than four tests.

For many of us, this is going to be an almost-normal holiday season—not because the virus is gone but because we've got better tools to deal with it. Nobody wants to be remembered for bringing the unwanted gift of COVID-19 to their friends and relatives.

Americans have found their happy place

By TYLER COWEN
Bloomberg Opinion

Tyler Cowen is a Bloomberg Opinion *columnist. He is a professor of economics at George Mason University and writes for the blog* Marginal Revolution. *He is coauthor of* Talent: How to Identify Energizers, Creatives, and Winners Around the World.

How happy are Americans, really? This country has its troubles, surely, but a new study suggests things may be better than they seem.

Two economists, David G. Blanchflower of Dartmouth and Alex Bryson of University College London, have come up with a new and more intuitive way to measure well-being. The results are striking. If you consider U.S. states as comparable to countries, 16 of the top 20 political units in the world for well-being are in the US — including the top seven.

Many happiness surveys ask individuals how satisfied they are with their lives. That is one way of phrasing the happiness question, but it has its biases. It tends to favor nations where people have a strong sense of self-satisfaction — or, if you want to put a more negative gloss on it, where the people are somewhat smug. Those are some of the studies in which Finland and Denmark come in first.

The genius of this most recent study is that it considers both positive and negative affect, and gives countries (and U.S. states) separate ratings for the two. In other words, it recognizes there is more than one dimension to well-being. It lists four variables as part of negative affect: pain, sadness, anger and worry. Positive affect consists of four measures: life satisfaction, enjoyment, smiling and being well-rested. So life satisfaction is only one part of the measure.

One interesting result is that nations that avoid negative affect are not necessarily the same as those which enjoy the highest positive affect. Some countries — including the U.S. — have a lot of extremes. Americans tend to go to the limit on both the upside and the downside.

Bhutan is an extreme contrast along these same lines. Measured only by positive affect, the Bhutanese are No. 9 in the world, an impressive showing. But for negative affect they rank No. 149 — in other words, they experience a great deal of negative emotion, perhaps due to the extreme hardships in their lives. Considering both positive and negative affect, they come in at No. 99, not a bad showing for such a poor country (better, in fact, than the UK's 111.)

Denmark's positive affect puts it only at No. 71, befitting the popular image of a country where not everyone is jumping for joy. Arkansas has a better positive affect, coming in at No. 67. But Denmark rates higher overall (38, to Arkansas's 72) because Arkansas shows higher negative affect (87, to Denmark's 66).

Measuring both positive and negative affect, the 10 happiest political units in the world are, in order: Hawaii, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Taiwan, Alaska and Wisconsin. Of the top 50 places, 36 are US states (I include the District of Columbia, No. 16). China is No. 30.

The high ratings for many U.S. political units are consistent with a realistic understanding that this remains a troubled nation. Those problems show up in Americans' higher negative affect, which is partially offset by our strong performance on positive affect.

The five least happy places, taking both positive and negative affect into account, are (from the bottom up) Iraq, South Sudan, Armenia, Togo and Central African Republic. The least happy U.S. state is West Virginia (101), due in part to being more tired and worried than most other states. California ranks No. 59, New York No. 73.

Has this study found the true measure of well-being or happiness? There is no such thing. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that measuring both positive and negative affect, and their component parts, might give a more accurate reading than just asking people about their life satisfaction.

This paper also raises more personal questions. Do you want a quiet and complacent existence? Or do you prefer a life of great joy punctuated by periods of pain and sadness? If the latter, America may be the place for you. If, on the other hand, you wish to avoid trouble, consider Taiwan, currently ranked No. 1 for least negative affect.

No matter where you live, this study might prompt you to consider what makes you smile or angry in your own life. Just be sure to read it when you are well-rested and, whatever you think of it, try not to let it worry you.

PELOSI

from page 8

contraception coverage and of the health care law.

She and the American bishops battled for years over abortion rights. "I had five children in six years and one week. That's a lovely thing for me. That should not be the standard I set for anybody else," Pelosi said. "This is none of anybody's business. It's a woman's right to make her own choices with her family, her God, her doctor."

Asked if she had any regrets over her 35 years in Congress, she quickly replied no.

Nothing? "No. Nothing."

But she does have stories to tell. Pelosi said she would probably write a memoir "because I've got to set the record straight about certain things."

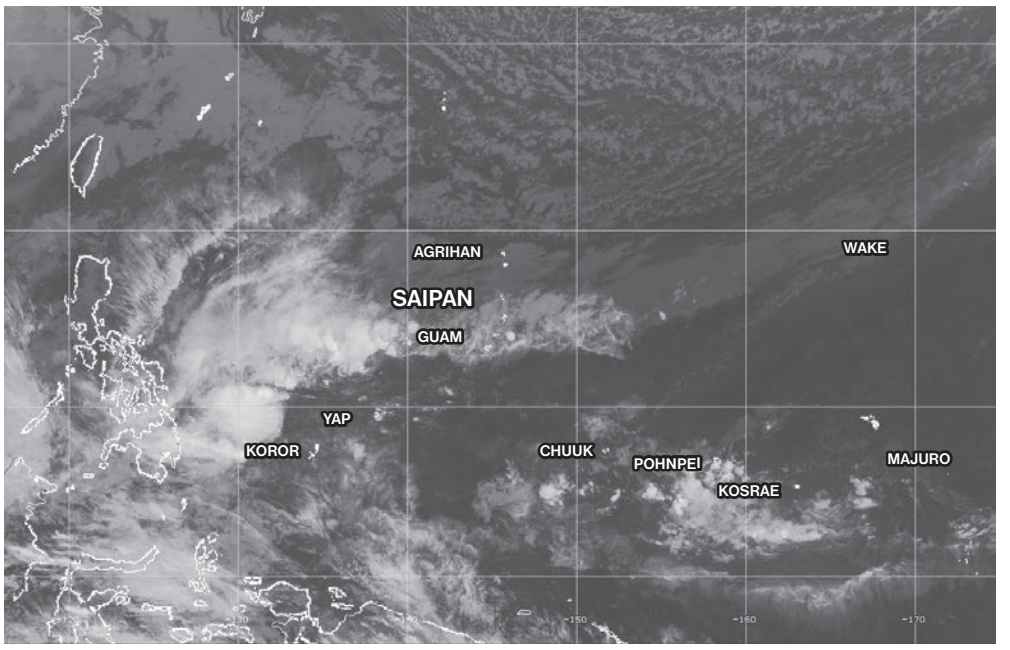
As a backbencher in the new Congress starting in January, she should have more time to begin that project. As the leader emerita, perhaps she could make the Board of Education her writing room.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny
85º 75º	85º 75º	85º 75º	85º 75º	85º 75º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:58 AM, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Radar and satellite show scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms near Guam and Rota with more isolated showers up towards Tinian and Saipan. The buoys and altimetry data show combined seas of 7 to 9 feet, composed of northwest and northeast swells.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Cloudy	84° / 76°
Palau	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°
Yap	Thunderstorms	85° / 78°
Chuuk	Cloudy	86° / 80°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	84° / 78°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	87° / 78°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	75° / 63°
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	43° / 21°
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	73° / 63°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	79° / 64°
London	Showers	55° / 34°
Los Angeles	Sunny	78° / 50°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	90° / 75°
Melbourne	Rain	73° / 52°
Miami	Mostly Sunny	81° / 72°
New York	Partly Cloudy	50° / 34°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	55° / 45°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	43° / 36°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	54° / 30°
Rome	Sunny	57° / 41°
Salem	Cloudy	52° / 39°
San Francisco	Sunny	60° / 45°
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	39° / 19°
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	54° / 39°
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	48° / 33°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Thursday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Friday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Saturday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Sunday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	10:39 AM	10:09 PM	-
Thursday	11:32 AM	11:12 PM	-
Friday	12:19 PM	-	-
Saturday	-	12:46 AM	12:56 PM
Sunday	-	1:37 AM	1:34 PM

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY	FEET	
05:21 AM	Low Tide	-0.51
12:38 PM	High Tide	1.77
6:29 PM	Low Tide	0.95
10:57 PM	High Tide	1.49

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:00AM	7:45AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:40PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

OZ624	3:40PM	7:40PM	3, 6
TW308	4:30PM	8:20PM	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	3, 7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:40PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ623	9:00AM	2:40PM	3, 6
TW307	10:00AM	3:30PM	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

BX622	8:00AM	1:10PM	3, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF AUGUST 18, 2022

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:00 A.M.	7:15 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
9:50 A.M.	10:05 A.M.	
4:00 P.M.	4:15 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:35 A.M.	7:50 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
10:25 A.M.	10:40 A.M.	
4:35 P.M.	4:50 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:10 A.M.	8:40 A.M.	
1:45 P.M.	2:15 P.M.	

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:00 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
2:35 P.M.	3:05 P.M.	

SAIPAN TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:10 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	
5:15 P.M.	6:05 P.M.	

GUAM TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:30 P.M.	1:20 P.M.	
6:40 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Hafabean serves coffee and smiles

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

LEIGH GASES

Hafabean, a locally owned coffee shop located in Middle Road next to the 99 Cents Supermarket, caters to those who want a daily fresh cup of joe, or to those who would like another splash of flavor, they could try their teas, energy drinks, frosts, and sodas.

LEIGH GASES

Business owners Luther Taylor and his fiancée, Kristin, pose for a photo in front of their locally owned coffee shop, Hafabean, located on Middle Road next to the 99 Cents Supermarket.

Hafabean, which opened last Aug. 26, is a one-stop shop for coffee and smiles.

The friendly faces of owners Luther Taylor and his fiancee, Kristin, along with their staff, is enough to put a smile on your face even before you take that first sip of freshly brewed coffee.

Their extensive coffee menu, which is coffee brewed from the roaster Coava that originated from Portland, Oregon, will have you mouth-watering with their own renditions of hot, iced, blended, or cold brew coffee.

As per usual, you can get your cup of joe in three different sizes—small, medium, and large. Pair it up with their selection of pastries and your morning is complete.

Golden Dream, which is a caramel, vanilla latte; and the Creme de la Creme, which is a caramel mocha; are the favorites of Hafabean's coffee patrons.

Don't have a taste for coffee? Whether you are a coffee addict or just need something refreshing to start your day or get through it, you are sure to find something to smile about after taking a sip of their freshly crafted teas, energy drinks, frosts, and sodas.

Something on the menu that stands out is their selection of colorful and flavorful energy drinks. A mix of fruit flavors and energy drinks are mixed well to create a colorful concoction that not only satisfies and refreshes the taste buds, but is also appealing to look at.

With the modern, clean, and tropical interior, you're sure to enjoy your time at this locally owned coffee shop.

LEIGH GASES

The coffee shop's modern decor, along with the friendly owners and staff in Hafabean invites you to stay while you enjoy the drink of your choice.

The 30-year-old business owners are no strangers to the customer service and retail world, as they were in the industry for 10 years prior to being coffee connoisseurs.

Then, when the pandemic hit, it was a sort of blessing in disguise for the two coffee lovers as they spent their time in Oregon buying and tasting different types of coffee from all the available coffee shops that were open during the pandemic. They even worked as baristas in local coffee shops and surrounded themselves with their passion– coffee.

Finally, the couple, who vacation to Saipan occasionally, had their eureka moment on the way back to Oregon, and proceeded to make the plans to open a coffee shop back home, which took about a year and a half. The couple returned home in October 2021.

"We felt like we were the perfect candidates to open a coffee shop because every time we go somewhere, we're always critiquing to ourselves 'what could have been better for our experience?'… So now, it's in our control. It's like, okay, now we can do it in a way of what service means to us," said Kristin about why they decided to open Hafabean.

Both Luther and Kristin wanted to create a workspace where they were happy and with their coffee shop, it has come into fruition. "It's such a crazy thing to be able to wake up and be like, 'man, this is the work environment we're creating.' We weren't expecting to have customers come back almost every day or hang out by the bar and talk to us. What a pleasure to be able to have that kind of relationship with your customers. That's what Luther and I were hoping for and praying for, and it's happening."

"Customer service is our forefront. That's what we really want to prioritize and I feel like we're getting a lot of kudos for that. A lot of people tell us 'it was the service that really kept us coming back.'"

Check out their instagram at Hafabeancoffee. Their coffee shop hours are from 6am to 4pm from Monday through Saturday in their Middle Road location, which is the building directly next to 99 Cents Super Market.

United Airlines invites customers to utilize convenient Early Check-in service in Guam

GUAM—As the holiday travel rush has begun, United Airlines reminds customers to check in three hours before their flight's departure to avoid delays. United reminds customers that Early Check-in service is available for all Guam travelers who are departing on early morning flights.

The Early Check-in service welcomes early departing passengers to check in the night before their flights to avoid long lines as a result of peak travel demand. Early Check-in service is offered daily from 7:30pm to 9:30pm at the United counter at the A. B. Won Pat International Airport, Guam. Passengers departing on any of the following United early morning flights are welcome to utilize the service:

- Honolulu (HNL) - UA200
- Island Hopper flights (TKK/PNI/KSA/KWA/MAJ/HNL) - UA155/UA133
- Saipan (SPN) - UA174
- Tokyo/Narita, Japan (NRT) - UA828
- Osaka, Kansai Japan (KIX) - UA151
- Nagoya, Japan (NGO) - UA137
- Fukuoka, Japan (FUK) - UA165

Justin Marion, United's general manager of Airport Operations in Guam, said "We invite our customers who have early morning flights to check in the night before departure. Early Check-in service has been well received by our customers, who appreciate the added convenience of checking in during a time when it is typically slower at the airport. Many of our flights depart early in the morning, and customers who opt to check in early have more time in the morning, skip the holiday lines, and can head straight to the security checkpoint. We also remind customers that they can check in online through the United app and then check their bags the evening before departure."

Marion added, "We are experiencing a significant increase in holiday travel. Early Check-in helps our customers to reduce any last-minute stresses before they travel and have a better experience overall, which is our goal here at United." ***(PR)***

Holiday sales up 7.6% despite the squeeze of inflation

NEW YORK (AP)—Holiday sales rose this year as American spending remained resilient during the critical shopping season despite surging prices on everything from food to rent, according to one measure.

Holiday sales rose 7.6, a slower pace than the 8.5% increase from a year earlier when shoppers began spending the money they had saved during the early part of the pandemic, according to Mastercard SpendingPulse, which tracks all kinds of payments including cash and debit cards.

Mastercard SpendingPulse had expected a 7.1% increase. The data released Monday excludes the automotive industry and is not adjusted for inflation, which has eased somewhat but remains painfully high.

U.S. sales between Nov. 1 and Dec. 24, a period that is critical for retailers, were fueled by spending at restaurants and on clothing.

By category, clothing rose 4.4%, while jewelry and electronics dipped roughly 5%. Online sales jumped 10.6% from a year ago and in-person spending rose 6.8%. Department stores registered a modest 1% increase over 2021.

"This holiday retail season looked different than years past," Steve Sadove, the former CEO and chairman at Saks and a senior advisor for Mastercard, said in a prepared statement. "Retailers discounted heavily, but consumers diversified their holiday spending to accommodate rising prices and an appetite for experiences and festive gatherings post-pandemic."

Some of the increase reflected the impact of higher prices across the board.

Consumer spending accounts for nearly 70% of U.S. economic activity, and Americans have remained resilient ever since inflation first spiked almost 18 months ago. Cracks have begun to show, however, as higher prices for basic necessities take up an increasingly large share of everyone's take-home pay.

Inflation has retreated from the four-decade high it reached this summer, but it's still sapping the spending power of consumers. Prices rose 7.1% in November from a year ago, down from a peak of 9.1% in June.

Overall spending has slowed from the pandemic-infused splurges and shifted increasingly toward necessities like food, while spending on electronics, furniture, new clothes and other non-necessities has faded. Many shoppers been trading down to private label goods, which are typically less expensive than national brands. They've been going to cheaper stores like dollar chains and big box stores like Walmart.

Consumers also waited for deals. Stores expected more procrastinators to hit stores in the last few days before Christmas compared with a year ago when people began shopping earlier due to a global disruption of the supply chain that created thousands of product shortages.

Nation

Frigid monster storm across US claims at least 34 lives

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)—Millions of people hunkered down against a deep freeze Sunday to ride out the winter storm that has killed at least 34 people across the United States and is expected to claim more lives after trapping some residents inside houses with heaping snow drifts and knocking out power to tens of thousands of homes and businesses.

The scope of the storm has been nearly unprecedented, stretching from the Great Lakes near Canada to the Rio Grande along the border with Mexico. About 60% of the U.S. population faced some sort of winter weather advisory or warning, and temperatures plummeted drastically below normal from east of the Rocky Mountains to the Appalachians, the National Weather Service said.

Travelers' weather woes are likely to continue, with hundreds of flight cancellations already and more expected after a bomb cyclone — when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in a strong storm — developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions, including heavy winds and snow. Some 1,707 domestic and international flights were canceled on Sunday as of about 2 p.m. EDT, according to the tracking site FlightAware.

The storm unleashed its full fury on Buffalo, with hurricane-force winds and snow causing whiteout conditions, paralyzing emergency response efforts. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said almost every fire truck in the city was stranded Saturday and implored people Sunday to respect an ongoing driving ban in the region. Officials said the airport would be shut through Tuesday morning. The National Weather Service said the snow total at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport stood at 43 inches (109 centimeters) at 7 a.m. Sunday.

Daylight revealed cars nearly covered by 6-foot snowdrifts and thousands of houses, some adorned in unlit holiday displays, dark from a lack of power. With snow swirling down untouched and impassable streets, forecasters warned that an additional 1 to 2 feet of snow was possible in some areas through early Monday morning amid wind gusts of 40 mph. Police said Sunday evening that there were two "isolated" instances of looting during the storm.

Two people died in their suburban Cheektowaga, New York, homes Friday when emergency crews could not reach them in time to treat their medical conditions. County Executive Mark Poloncarz 10 more people died in Erie County during the storm, including six in Buffalo, and warned there may be more dead.

"Some were found in cars, some were found on the street in snowbanks," said Poloncarz. "We know there are people who have been stuck in cars for more than 2 days."

Freezing conditions and

AP

{span}A car sits blanketed in snow on a driveway, Sunday, Dec. 25, 2022, in Amherst, N.Y. {/span}

day-old power outages had Buffalonians scrambling to get to anywhere that had heat amid what Hochul called the longest sustained blizzard conditions ever in the city. But with streets under a thick blanket of white, that wasn't an option for people like Jeremy Manahan, who charged his phone in his parked car after almost 29 hours without electricity.

Law protects export of sacred Native American items from US

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP)— Federal penalties have increased under a newly signed law intended to protect the cultural patrimony of Native American tribes, immediately making some crimes a felony and doubling the prison time for anyone convicted of multiple offenses.

President Joe Biden signed the Safeguard Tribal Objects of Patrimony Act on Dec. 21, a bill that had been introduced since 2016. Along with stiffer penalties, it prohibits the export of sacred Native American items from the U.S. and creates a certification process to distinguish art from sacred items.

The effort largely was inspired by pueblo tribes in New Mexico and Arizona who repeatedly saw sacred objects up for auction in France. Tribal leaders issued passionate pleas for the return of the items but were met with resistance and the reality that the U.S. had no mechanism to prevent the items from leaving the country.

"The STOP Act is really born out of that problem and hearing it over and over," said attorney Katie Klass, who represents Acoma Pueblo on the matter and is a citizen of the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma. "It's really designed to link existing domestic laws that protect tribal cultural heritage with an existing international mechanism."

The law creates an export certification system that would help clarify whether items were created as art and provides a path for the voluntary return of items that are part of a tribe's cultural heritage. Federal agencies would work with Native Americans, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians to outline what items should not leave the U.S. and to seek items back.

Information provided by tribes about those items would be shielded from public records laws.

While dealers and collectors often see the items as art to be displayed and preserved, tribes view the objects as living beings held in community, said Brian Vallo, a consultant on repatriation.

"These items remain sacred, they will never lose their significance," said Vallo, a former governor of Acoma Pueblo in New Mexico. "They will never lose their power and place as a cultural item. And it is for this reason that we are so concerned."

Tribes have seen some wins over the years:

■ In 2019, Finland agreed to return ancestral remains of Native American tribes that once called the cliffs of Mesa Verde National Park in southern Colorado home. The remains and artifacts were unearthed by a Swedish researcher in 1891 and held in the collection of the national Museum of Finland.

■ That same year, a ceremonial shield that vanished from Acoma Pueblo in the 1970s was returned to the tribe after a nearly four-year campaign involving U.S. senators, diplomats and prosecutors. The circular, colorful shield featuring the face of a Kachina, or ancestral spirit, had been held at a Paris auction house.

■ In 2014, the Navajo Nation sent its vice president to Paris to bid on items believed to be used in wintertime healing ceremonies after diplomacy and a plea to return the items failed. The tribe secured several items, spending $9,000.

■ In 2013, the Annenberg Foundation quietly bought nearly two dozen ceremonial items at an auction in Paris and later returned them to the Hopi, the San Carlos Apache and the White Mountain Apache tribes in Arizona. The tribes said the items invoke the spirit of their ancestors and were taken in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

ACROSS THE NATION

NY Rep.-elect Santos admits lying about career, college

WASHINGTON (AP)—Rep.-elect George Santos, R-N.Y., admitted Monday that he lied about his job experience and college education during his successful campaign for a seat in the U.S. House.

In an interview with the New York Post, Santos said: "My sins here are embellishing my resume. I'm sorry."

He also told the newspaper: "I campaigned talking about the people's concerns, not my resume" and added, "I intend to deliver on the promises I made during the campaign."

The New York Times raised questions last week about the life story that Santos, 34, had presented during his campaign.

The Queens resident had said he had obtained a degree from Baruch College in New York, but the school said that couldn't be confirmed.

On Monday, Santos acknowledged: "I didn't graduate from any institution of higher learning. I'm embarrassed and sorry for having embellished my resume."

He added: "I own up to that. … We do stupid things in life."

Santos had also said he had worked for Citigroup and Goldman Sachs, but neither company could find any records verifying that.

Santos told the Post he had "never worked directly" for either financial firm, saying he had used a "poor choice of words."

He told the Post that Link Bridge, an investment company where he was a vice president, did business with both.

Manhattan man charged in 2 random knife slashing murders

NEW YORK (AP)—Two seemingly isolated and random outdoor murders at the height of the holiday season and of the kind New Yorkers have increasingly feared since the pandemic began were blamed by police officials Monday on a city resident with a criminal record.

James Essig, chief of detectives for the New York Police Department, underscored at a news conference how brief and unplanned were the encounters Roland Codrington is accused of having with two men slashed to death in nighttime killings three days apart, resulting in two murder charges.

It was not immediately clear who would represent Codrington at initial court appearances.

The killings come at a time of increased anxiety citywide over random violence. Mayor Eric Adams recently announced plans for authorities to more aggressively intervene to help people who need mental health treatment, including forcing individuals off streets and subways and into treatment.

4th Washington state electrical substation vandalized

TACOMA, Wash. (AP)—A fourth electrical substation was vandalized late on Christmas Day in Washington state, leaving homes in Kapowsin and Graham temporarily without power, according to the Pierce County Sheriff's Office.

By 7 a.m. Monday, more than 10,500 Puget Sound Energy customers were without electricity across the region, KOMO-TV reported.

The suspects broke into a fenced area and vandalized equipment, causing a fire, officials said. The fire was extinguished and power was later restored, but no suspects are in custody, officials said.

The attacks come as federal officials are warning that the U.S. power grid needs better security to prevent domestic terrorism and after a large outage in North Carolina earlier this month that took days to repair.

The first substation was vandalized at about 5:30 a.m. Sunday, followed by a second substation, according to Tacoma Public Utilities. The outages affected about 7,300 customers in an area southeast of Tacoma. Just before noon, the utility had restored power to all but 2,700 customers whose power was estimated to be restored at about 6:30 p.m. Sunday.

Asia

China races to vaccinate its elderly but many reluctant

BEIJING (AP)—Chinese authorities are going door to door and paying people older than 60 to get vaccinated against COVID-19. But even as cases surge, 64-year-old Li Liansheng said his friends are alarmed by stories of fevers, blood clots and other side effects.

"When people hear about such incidents, they may not be willing to take the vaccines," said Li, who had been vaccinated before he caught COVID-19. A few days after his 10-day bout with the virus, Li is nursing a sore throat and cough. He said it was like a "normal cold" with a mild fever.

China has joined other countries in treating cases instead of trying to stamp out virus transmission by dropping or easing rules on testing, quarantines and movement as it tries to reverse an economic slump. But the shift has flooded hospitals with feverish, wheezing patients.

The National Health Commission announced a campaign Nov. 29 to raise the vaccination rate among older Chinese, which health experts say is crucial to avoiding a health care crisis. It's also the biggest hurdle before the ruling Communist Party can lift the last of the world's most stringent antivirus restrictions.

China kept case numbers low for two years with a "zero-COVID" strategy that isolated cities and confined millions of people to their homes. Now, as it backs off that approach, it is facing the widespread outbreaks that other countries have already gone through.

The health commission has recorded only six COVID-19 fatalities this month, bringing the country's official toll to 5,241. That is despite multiple reports by families of relatives dying.

China only counts deaths from pneumonia or respiratory failure in its official COVID-19 toll, a health official said last week. That unusually narrow definition excludes many deaths other countries would attribute to COVID-19.

Experts have forecast 1 to 2 million deaths in China through the end of 2023.

Li, who was exercising at the leafy grounds of central Beijing's Temple of Heaven, said he is considering getting a second booster due to the publicity campaign: "As long as we know the vaccine won't cause big side effects, we should take it."

Neighborhood committees that form the lowest level of government have been ordered to find everyone 65 and older and keep track of their health. They are doing what state media call the "ideological work" of lobbying residents to persuade elderly relatives to get vaccinated.

In Beijing, the Chinese capital, the Liulidun neighborhood is promising people over 60 up to 500 yuan ($70) to get a two-dose vaccination course and one booster.

The National Health Commission announced Dec. 23 the number of people being vaccinated daily had more than doubled to 3.5 million nationwide. But that still is a small fraction of the tens of millions of shots that were being administered every day in early 2021.

Older people are put off by potential side effects of Chinese-made vaccines, for which the government hasn't announced results of testing on people in their 60s and older.

Li said a 55-year-old friend suffered fevers and blood clots after being vaccinated. He said they can't be sure the shot was to blame, but his friend is reluctant to get another.

Japan PM sacks 4th minister to patch up scandal-hit Cabinet

TOKYO (AP)—Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Tuesday dismissed his fourth minister in two months to patch a scandal-tainted Cabinet that has raised questions over his judgment of staff credentials.

Kenya Akiba, minister in charge of reconstruction of Fukushima and other disaster-hit areas, has faced allegations of mishandling political and election funds and of having murky ties to the Unification Church, whose cozy political ties and practices surrounding followers' huge donations have raised controversy.

"I have made a heavy decision and submitted my resignation," Akiba told reporters after meeting with Kishida. He repeated that he has never violated any law in relation to the issues for which he has been criticized.

Kishida tapped former reconstruction minister Hiromichi Watanabe as a replacement. Watanabe's appointment was to be official after a palace ceremony.

Akiba's dismissal was seen as Kishida's attempt to remove an administration's soft spot that could stall upcoming parliamentary work on a key budget bill, including hefty defense spending aimed at bolstering Japan's strike capability.

Jun Azumi, a senior lawmaker of the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan who has criticized Kishida as making other slow decisions on his staff, said Monday that "four (dismissals) are too much and the prime minister should be held responsible over their appointment."

Kishida on Tuesday also replaced Internal Affairs Minister Mio Sugita, who has made past derogatory remarks against sexual and ethnic minorities. Sugita said in 2018 same-sex couples don't produce children and are "unproductive" and in 2016 scoffed at those wearing traditional ethnic costumes at an United Nations' committee meeting as "middle-aged women in costume play."

Kishida said Sugita submitted her resignation saying that she cannot bend her personal beliefs while she retracted some of her earlier comments.

Kishida had been seen as a stable choice as leader after his victory in the July vote, but his popularity has plummeted over the Liberal Democratic Party's widespread church ties that surfaced after the assassination of former leader Shinzo Abe.

The suspected shooter told investigators his mother's donations to the church bankrupted his family and ruined his life. He reportedly targeted Abe as a key figure behind the church's ties to Japan's LDP-led government.

Revelations have since surfaced about many LDP lawmakers having friendly ties to the church, which has been criticized as allegedly brainwashing followers into making huge donations. A new law passed by Parliament earlier this month aims to restrict such activities.

Economic Revitalization Minister Daishiro Yamagiwa quit on Oct. 24 after failing to explain his ties to the Unification Church. In early November, Justice Minister Yasuhiro Hanashi resigned after remarking that his job is low profile and only makes news when he signs the death penalty.

World

Ukraine FM looking at February peace summit

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Ukraine's foreign minister said Monday that his nation wants a summit to end the war but he doesn't anticipate Russia taking part, a statement making it hard to foresee the devastating invasion ending soon.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told The Associated Press that his government wants a "peace" summit within two months at the United Nations with Secretary-General António Guterres as mediator.

The U.N. gave a very cautious response.

"As the secretary-general has said many times in the past, he can only mediate if all parties want him to mediate," U.N. associate spokesperson Florencia Soto Nino-Martinez said Monday.

Kuleba said Russia must face a war-crimes tribunal before his country directly talks with Moscow. He said, however, that other nations should feel free to engage with Russians, as happened before a grain agreement between Turkey and Russia.

The AP interview offered a glimpse at Ukraine's vision of how the war with Russia could one day end, although any peace talks would be months away and highly contingent on complex international negotiations.

Kuleba also said he was "absolutely satisfied" with the results of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to the U.S. last week, and he revealed that the U.S. government had made a special plan to get the Patriot missile battery ready to be operational in the country in less than six months. Usually, the training takes up to a year.

AP

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba talks during an interview with The Associated Press in Kyiv, Ukraine, Monday, Dec. 26, 2022.

Kuleba said during the interview at the Foreign Ministry that Ukraine will do whatever it can to win the war in 2023.

"Every war ends in a diplomatic way," he said. "Every war ends as a result of the actions taken on the battlefield and at the negotiating table."

Commenting on Kuleba's proposal, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told the state RIA Novosti news agency that Russia "never followed conditions set by others. Only our own and common sense."

A Kremlin spokesman said last week that no Ukrainian peace plan can succeed without taking into account "the realities of today that can't be ignored" — a reference to Moscow's demand that Ukraine recognize Russia's sovereignty over the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed in 2014, as well as other territorial gains.

Kuleba said the Ukrainian government would like to have the "peace" summit by the end of February.

"The United Nations could be the best venue for holding this summit, because this is not about making a favor to a certain country," he said. "This is really about bringing everyone on board."

Serbia places its troops on Kosovo border on combat alert

PRISTINA, Kosovo (AP)—Serbia on Monday placed its security troops on the border with Kosovo on "the full state of combat readiness," ignoring NATO's calls for calming down of tensions between the two wartime Balkan foes.

Serbia's Interior Minister Bratislav Gasic said he "ordered the full combat readiness" of police and other security units and that they be placed under the command of the army chief of staff according to "their operational plan."

He said in a statement that he acted on the orders of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic so that "all measures be taken to protect the Serbian people in Kosovo."

It was not immediately clear what this order meant on the ground as Serbian troops have been on alert for a while on the border with Kosovo. Officials claim alleged harassment of Kosovo Serbs by ethnic Albanians who are a majority in the breakaway province that declared its independence in 2008.

Earlier Monday, NATO-led peacekeepers said they were investigating a shooting incident in a tense northern region of Kosovo, urging calm as Serbia's top military officials inspected their troops on the border in a show of combat readiness.

The incident on Sunday evening took place in Zubin Potok, a town where local ethnic Serbs have been manning road barricades for the past two weeks and where tensions have been running high.

The peacekeepers, known as KFOR, said the incident happened near one of their patrols, involving unknown people. A statement said no one was injured and "we are working to establish all the facts."

Serbia's defense minister and the army's chief of staff traveled to the border with Kosovo, praising the combat readiness of Serbian troops and their firepower, including howitzers and other military hardware. Serbia, which has been armed through Russian donations and military purchases, has been sabre rattling and threatening force against its former province for a long time.

Kosovo remains a potential flashpoint in the Balkans years after the 1998-99 war that ended with NATO intervention. Serbia doesn't recognize the 2008 declaration of independence of its former province, while Western efforts to mediate a solution so far have failed.

Good Housekeeping

How to make a vacation home's decor shine

HANDOUT/TNS
Common and social areas should have neutral but sturdy furniture.

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service

So you just purchased the perfect vacation or weekend home. While the rush of excitement is great, for many, the task of furnishing it may be a bit overwhelming. Often, the weekend home becomes the dumping ground for a hodgepodge of excess furniture or whatever may be collecting dust in storage.

Instead, here are some tips to help make that vacation home a design showpiecewith no need to break the bank.

Getting started

The first aspect to think about when furnishing your weekend or vacation home is how you will use the space. Will it be solely for you and your family to enjoy, or will you rent it out partially as an investment property?

Homes used for rental purposes will receive more wear and tear than one for just you and your family. As a result, consider materials such as hospitality or commercial-grade fabrics, along with leather or Naugahyde, as opposed to lighter or more fragile fabrics. Hospitality and commercial grade fabrics are also great solutions for everyday residential use, especially for those who have pets and children.

Furniture

Vacation and weekend homes are often places where people desire to bring and invite guests. How you plan to entertain may also play a role in your furniture selections. An investment in a good quality sofa should top your list.

When looking for a sofa, here are some aspects to consider:

■ Choose a sofa made of kiln dried hardwood as opposed to a soft wood such as pine.

HANDOUT/TNS
A small space is still made to feel bright and inviting.

HANDOUT/TNS
A space for children is created using bright and bold colors.

■ Learn about how the foundation of the sofa is created, as the sturdiness of the frame will impact its longevity. In general, the more springs, ties and reinforcement, the better.

■ Choose partial down or foam-filled seat cushions, as opposed to those filled with pure down. While down is cozy and soft, there comes a point where begins to flatten and will not look as plump as it once did.

Flooring

Beyond your sofa selection, the next important selection should be the flooring material or floor covering.

Flooring for an investment property should be durable, so be sure to select a low-maintenance flooring solution such as porcelain tile or well-protected hardwood. In general, carpeting may not be the ideal solution due to potential staining and odor.

Colors

When it comes to colors for your vacation home, consider soft, soothing hues. As this is a home in which you wish to get away from it all, creating an inviting oasis will help increase your enjoyment.

Some colors to consider include:

■ Charcoal gray. Charcoal gray pairs well with light and bright colors, and it will also hide potential stains.

■ Blue. In general, blue is a calming, soothing, cool color that helps a space feel more relaxing.

■ Yellow. Yellow is a bright, happy color that can help perk up potentially dark spaces.

■ Green. Green is a color that can add a lot of interest to a space and serves as a great accent color.

How much should you expect to spend?

Furniture, lighting and accessories can be little or big-ticket items depending on your budget and taste. Expect to pay the most for your larger items such as sofas and beds. When making your purchasing decisions, consider how long you plan to keep the home. Buying long-lasting furniture has its advantages; however, if you only plan to keep a home short term, you may wish to consider furnishing your home using a blend of high and low pieces.

Keep in mind, however, that just because an item isn't expensive doesn't mean it isn't well designed, so be sure to pay attention to quality of construction. Don't forget to include artwork and accessories, as these can really help a space feel finished, while artificial blooms and succulents can serve as icing on the cake.

HANDOUT/TNS
Outdoor spaces often have universal appeal.

Life & Style

Tennis ace Boris Becker recalls prison loneliness, friends

BERLIN (AP)—Tennis great Boris Becker tearfully recounted the moment the door of his single-occupancy cell at Britain's notorious Wandsworth prison closed for the first time, speaking publicly after serving eight months for bankruptcy offenses.

"It was the loneliest moment I've ever had in life," Becker said in an interview with German broadcaster SAT.1 that aired Tuesday, recalling how hours earlier he had been unable to say farewell to his loved ones before being led downstairs to the courtroom jail.

The three-time Wimbledon champion was sentenced to 30 months in prison in April for illicitly transferring large amounts of money and hiding assets after he was declared bankrupt. Becker would normally have had to serve half of his sentence before being eligible for release, but was released early under a fast-track deportation program for foreign nationals.

Becker, who was deported to his native Germany on Dec. 15, said he prayed daily in the three weeks between his conviction and sentencing, conscious that there was a chance he might not get away with a suspended sentence.

Arriving in Wandsworth, the 55-year-old Becker said he feared attacks by other inmates.

"The many films I saw beforehand didn't help," he said.

Becker said prison authorities appeared to have tried to ensure his safety, allocating him a single cell and getting three experienced inmates—or "listeners"—to guide him in his new life behind bars.

Becker

That included coping with the lack of food, Becker said, as prison fare was largely restricted to rice, potatoes and sauce. "Sunday roasts" consisted of a chicken drumstick, he said.

"I felt hunger for the first time in my life," said Becker, who won the first of many millions of dollars as a player at the age of 17.

Violence was a problem, he said, recounting instances at Wandsworth and later at HMP Huntercombe where inmates threatened to harm him until others stepped in.

Known for his showmanship on the court, Becker said he immersed himself in stoic philosophy while in prison and embraced the opportunity to teach fellow prisoners math and English—despite being German.

In November, fellow inmates managed to organize three chocolate cakes for his birthday, Becker said.

"I've never experienced such solidarity in the free world," Becker said, adding that he planned to stay in touch with friends he'd made in prison.

For Becker, who rose to stardom in 1985 at age 17 when he became the first unseeded player to win the men's singles title at Wimbledon, the prison sentence was a heavy blow.

Asked about the judge's statement that Becker had shown "no humility," he acknowledged in the interview that "maybe I should have (been) even more clear, more emotional" during the trial.

Becker also admitted fault.

"Of course I was guilty," he said of the four out of 29 counts he was convicted on.

Still, Becker said he "it could have been much worse."

After retiring from professional tennis in 1999, the six-time Grand Slam champion worked as a coach, television pundit, investor and celebrity poker player.

Now he hopes to turn a new page and avoid the mistakes he made in the past—many of which he blamed on laziness and bad financial advice received from others that led to his 2017 bankruptcy.

"It's up to me to keep going down that path and stay true to myself," he said. "I believe prison was good for me."

Becker said he and partner Lilian De Carvalho Monteiro likely won't stay in Germany, where privacy is hard to maintain. Instead, he suggested Miami or Dubai might become his next home.

But the former world No. 1's time outside the limelight probably won't last long.

Organizers of the annual Berlinale said Tuesday that next year's film festival will feature the premiere of an as-yet untitled documentary about Becker by Oscar-winning director Alex Gibney, with a red carpet appearance by the protagonist likely.

Trial in shooting of Megan Thee Stallion exposes 'misogynoir'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Megan Thee Stallion is a three-time Grammy winner and hip-hop superstar, but her success wasn't enough to shield the 27-year-old artist from the power of widespread misinformation and social media vitriol leveled against her after she was shot in 2020.

The Houston-born rapper, whose legal name is Megan Pete, was shot multiple times in both feet after leaving a Hollywood Hills party in 2020 with rapper Tory Lanez, whose legal name is Daystar Peterson, and former assistant Kelsey Harris. Megan needed surgery to remove the bullet fragments from her feet. On Friday, a jury found Lanez guilty of all three felonies with which he was charged, which could lead to up to 22 years in prison.

Stallion

Three months after the shooting, Megan accused Lanez of wielding the gun. The ensuing onslaught of criticism reached a fever pitch this month during Lanez's assault trial. Experts say it stems from misogynoir, a specific type of misogyny experienced by Black women.

Tia Tyree, a professor at Howard University, described misogynoir as "contempt, dislike" or mistreatment of Black women.

Tyree, whose research focuses on representations of Black women in mass media, social media and hip-hop culture, emphasized that misogynoir has been part of the Black female experience in the U.S. for centuries, dating back to the beginnings of American slavery.

"Many people see the term, and they're intrigued by it. They think, 'Wow, what is this new thing happening to Black women?'" she said. "And that's the most disappointing part of the narrative about misogynoir. There's nothing new about the mistreatment and disrespect of Black women in the United States."

Megan said she did not tell Los Angeles police responding to the scene until three months after the shooting because she was afraid for her safety.

The shooting happened on July 12, 2020, less than two months after George Floyd died at the hands of Minneapolis police.

Fear of police violence could have played a role in her reluctance to share specifics with officers, Tyree said, adding that Black women are expected to protect Black men in society.

A cycle of silence prevents many Black women from sharing their experiences, explained Melvin L. Williams, a professor at Pace University who studies hip-hop feminism, Black male rappers and hip-hop culture.

"They face industry blackballing and fewer professional opportunities when they speak out," Williams said.

Megan alleged that Lanez and his team spread misinformation about the shooting. Social media users have claimed that Lanez never shot her and have posted about her sexual history to discredit her.

Lanez, who has now been convicted of all three felonies and awaits sentencing, has maintained his innocence. In closing arguments this week, his lawyers argued that Harris was the shooter and that Megan tried to create a more sympathetic narrative by blaming Lanez.

Woman prefers thrill of hunt over monogamy

DEAR ABBY: I am a woman in my late 30s. I have had a few failed relationships and a marriage that ended in divorce. At one point, I juggled three lovers at a time. I like being in a committed relationship, but I have yet to be faithful to any partner I have ever dated.

In my teens, I was raped by an 18-year-old guy and molested by a man who was in his 40s. I received counseling and therapy starting in my late 20s. I love the thrill of meeting someone new and learning what they want for a little while. I mimic and mirror their emotions and make them fall in love. Then I get bored and move on to the challenge of conquering the next man's heart.

I don't want to continue being a cheater, but I lose interest in my lovers quickly. I crave the thrill of the chase. How can I learn to be faithful and not be so fickle in love?

UNFAITHFUL IN THE SOUTH

DEAR UNFAITHFUL: Are you still working with a therapist? If the answer is no, find another one and work out the answer to that question. Self-help groups can also help people recover from sex and love addictions. In your case, it might make sense for you to do both.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I need to address a family problem that has arisen due to the engagement of my 45-year-old son. We have been estranged since his mother passed away 15 years ago, and we have had no contact since then. He is being married for the first time.

There's some conjecture about whether I will be invited to the wedding. "Save the date" notices have gone out via Facebook, and I have been asked by some guests if I received one. Of course I haven't. I feel the current state of our relationship states the obvious, and I, as the senior adult, have accepted his silence. I intend to send a card wishing him well, but I feel that's all I should do. Your advice is wanted.

GROOM'S FATHER IN MASSACHUSETTS

DEAR GROOM'S FATHER: I wish you had mentioned what caused the estrangement from your son after his mother's death. However, I see nothing wrong with sending him a congratulatory card under the circumstances. If you do, I hope it is a first step in healing the breach between you.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I have a real problem with my cousin and her husband. I have two sons, 13 and 14, and both are on the autism spectrum. I home school, so we live on their disability. We also receive food stamps. My cousin and her husband live in the same town and stop by unannounced, but only at dinnertime after we've gotten our food stamps.

I told them this has to stop. Our food stamps barely cover us for a month, honestly. They told me I was rude and they keep coming! What else can I do to get them to stop, besides yell at them?

TAKING CARE OF MY OWN

DEAR TAKING CARE: Don't yell. Yelling would be rude. When they drop by, do not invite them in. Admit them only if they have brought food with them. Once you quit feeding them, those freeloaders will soon disappear. Trust me on that.

DEAR ABBY

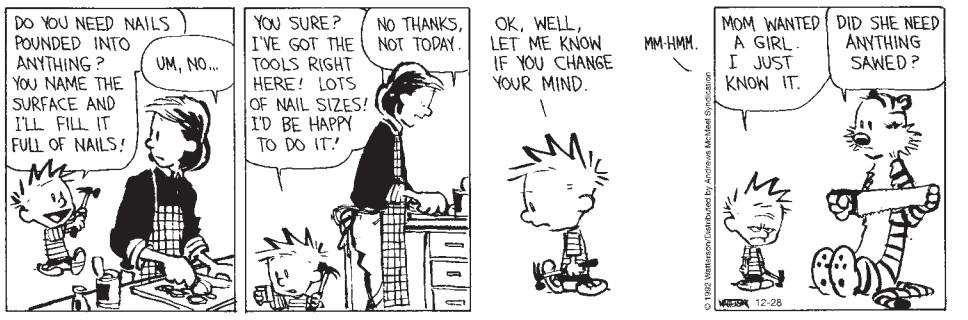
BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

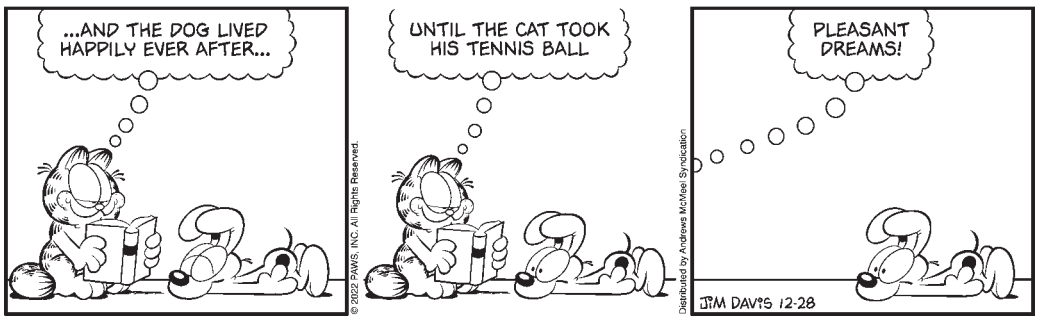
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


DO YOU NEED NAILS POUNDED INTO ANYTHING? YOU NAME THE SURFACE AND I'LL FILL IT FULL OF NAILS!
UM, NO...
YOU SURE? I'VE GOT THE TOOLS RIGHT HERE! LOTS OF NAIL SIZES! I'D BE HAPPY TO DO IT!
NO THANKS, NOT TODAY.
OK, WELL, LET ME KNOW IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.
MM-HMM.
MOM WANTED A GIRL. I JUST KNOW IT.
DID SHE NEED ANYTHING SAWED?
© 1992 Watterson/Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication
12-28

Garfield®

By Jim Davis


...AND THE DOG LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER...
UNTIL THE CAT TOOK HIS TENNIS BALL
PLEASANT DREAMS!
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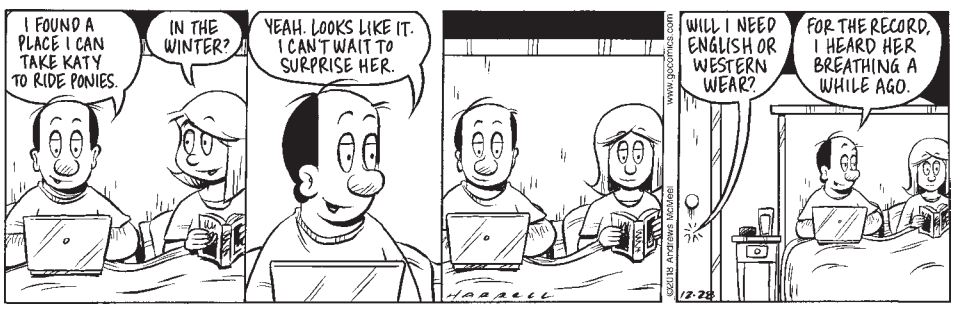
Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication
JIM DAVIS 12-28

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


I FOUND A PLACE I CAN TAKE KATY TO RIDE PONIES.
IN THE WINTER?
YEAH. LOOKS LIKE IT. I CAN'T WAIT TO SURPRISE HER.
WILL I NEED ENGLISH OR WESTERN WEAR?
FOR THE RECORD, I HEARD HER BREATHING A WHILE AGO.
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www.gocomics.com
12-28

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Spill catcher
4 Transcript no.
7 Long story
8 Bridge support
10 "Evita" surname
11 Eagles' homes
13 French cubist painter
16 New England cape
17 Minnesota's 10,000+
18 Strike caller
19 Della's role on "Touched by an Angel"
20 Singer Lovato
21 Wash off
23 Amtrak express
25 Denomination
26 Leisurely
27 Obamacare acronym
28 Tremor
30 Lucy of "Kill Bill"
33 Chickpeas
36 Grammy-winning bandleader Tito
37 Prefix for mural
38 Fills up
39 Memorandum
40 Ruin the veneer
41 Jargon suffix

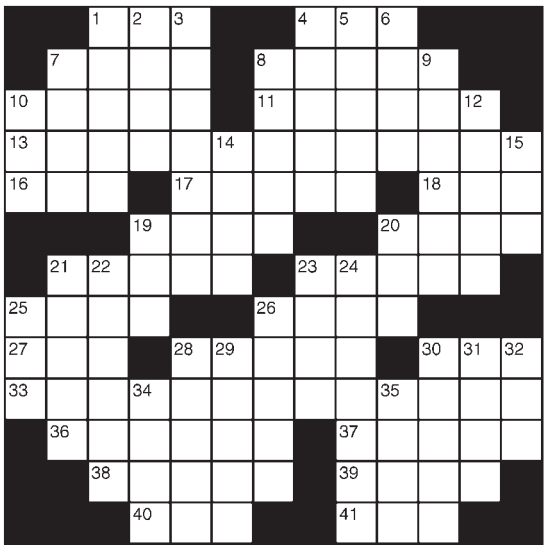
DOWN

1 Tycoon
2 Inventory Sikorsky
3 Bracelets
4 Loon's cousin
5 Engine hums
6 China setting
7 Viewed
8 To-do list items
9 "Part II" film
10 Links org.
12 — cum laude
14 Lighten
15 Prefix with gram or center
19 Blasting stick
20 Morning moisture
21 Summary
22 He flew too close to the sun
23 To boot
24 Mix together
25 Show fatigue
26 Shoe box numbers
28 Blitzen's boss
29 Door sign
30 Coffee bar order
31 Concerning
32 "Suits" network
34 Smile broadly
35 Adam's grandson

Solution time: 23 mins.

F	L	A	B	■	I	D	A	■	A	L	O	E		
R	I	T	E	■	N	U	T	■	S	A	N	S		
E	N	O	S	■	D	A	M	A	S	C	U	S		
D	A	M	A	G	E	D	■	M	E	E	S	E		
■	■	■	F	O	X	■	L	P	S	■	■	■		
S	I	R	E	D	■	D	A	M	S	E	L	S		
A	R	I	■	■	N	O	G	■	■	R	O	I		
D	A	M	P	E	N	S	■	A	G	E	N	T		
■	■	■	A	X	E	■	B	R	A	■	■	■		
A	D	A	G	E	■	D	A	M	M	I	N	G		
D	A	M	O	C	L	E	S	■	B	L	U	R		
D	R	E	D	■	I	M	S	■	I	S	N	O		
S	E	R	A	■	B	O	O	■	T	A	S	K		

Yesterday's answer 12-28



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: John Legend, 44; Denzel Washington, 68; Edgar Winter, 76; Dame Maggie Smith, 88.

Happy Birthday: Trust and believe in your ability to get things done. Consider your objective heading into next year and tally up what it will cost to reach your goal. Refuse to let uncertainty cloud your vision when a minor adjustment is all that's required to carry out your mission. Fire up your engines and take the path that makes you feel complete. Your numbers are 9, 12, 17, 27, 32, 41, 45.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Think big, but lower your expenses and keep the changes you make to a minimum. Seeing the whole picture will allow you to eliminate whatever isn't necessary. Don't look back; build a solid base for a brighter future. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Opportunity is closer than you think. Embrace offers that come your way, and you'll discover talents and skills you didn't know you had. You are heading into a new year, and it's time to sport a new and improved you. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Head in a direction that favors you instead of letting someone else reap the rewards you deserve. Refuse to let others play with your emotions or make you feel insecure. Set the pace, take the high road and do your own thing. ✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Present your thoughts and intentions. Don't be afraid to offer something unique. Reach out to someone you know you work well with, and together you'll devise an exciting way to use your skills and talents. Don't settle for less. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Leave nothing to chance. Do your due diligence, and you'll discover how to offer your services or help without being taken for granted. Don't feel obligated to be a part of someone else's dream. You have your wants and needs to fulfill. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Participate in activities that offer mental or physical stimulation. Share feelings, discuss possibilities and consider changes that make your life easier. A purchase will give you something to look forward to. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Stick to your schedule, finish what you start and ignore anyone who gives you a hard time or interferes with your progress. Don't be a pushover for someone who takes advantage of you when your strengths are versatility, equality and discipline. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Take care of responsibilities and move on to pleasurable pastimes. A shopping spree will uncover an item or affirmation that will shape your image and make you feel better about yourself and the changes you want to complete in the new year. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Stop worrying; settle into doing something constructive that puts your mind at ease and makes you feel comfortable heading into the new year. The less carryover you have, the easier it will be to achieve your heart's desire. Say no to manipulative people. ✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Avoid setbacks, stay in your lane and do what makes you happy. If you allow others to disrupt your plans, you'll fall short of your expectations. Stick to your goals. Invest more time and energy into life, love and personal contentment. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Adopt change because it's what you want, not due to pressure put on you by others. Size up your living arrangements, and you'll find an alternative more conducive to what you want to accomplish this year. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Get organized and prepare to pursue your dreams. Reach out to people you like to work alongside and set up a timetable that works for everyone. A positive change you support will have effects on you and your community. Personal gain looks promising. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are demonstrative, sensitive and creative. You are outgoing and insistent.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

				4				
2	7		1	3	8		9	4
	1		9		5	8		7
	3		5		2			1
	9		8		3			6
	2	5				3	7	
		8				4		
			6		4			
			2	5	1			

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/28

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

6	1	8	9	2	4	7	5	3
7	4	2	8	3	5	6	1	9
5	9	3	1	6	7	4	2	8
2	5	9	4	1	6	3	8	7
8	3	4	7	5	9	2	6	1
1	7	6	3	8	2	5	9	4
9	8	5	2	4	3	1	7	6
3	2	7	6	9	1	8	4	5
4	6	1	5	7	8	9	3	2

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

LESLIE JORDAN (1955-2022) **Solution: 12 letters**

M	A	D	H	O	U	S	E	P	H	P	F	K	R	C
I	O	L	O	L	E	V	O	L	A	E	T	I	O	A
S	S	V	I	W	O	E	W	E	I	Y	E	D	T	L
A	N	O	I	V	G	O	H	H	L	G	P	S	C	L
D	N	N	R	N	E	A	C	E	O	R	R	E	A	M
V	H	O	A	D	G	S	L	A	R	A	A	I	W	E
E	C	R	O	Ⓨ	I	L	D	R	T	C	C	D	I	K
N	N	E	A	Ⓜ	G	D	A	T	A	E	O	O	L	A
T	A	V	O	Ⓜ	W	G	D	S	P	P	R	B	L	T
U	R	I	M	Ⓔ	E	Y	E	S	I	I	E	I	I	A
R	O	D	A	I	L	R	V	P	K	N	H	A	F	W
E	R	E	N	I	L	O	I	N	S	K	G	B	E	A
S	R	N	G	I	F	T	L	C	A	L	L	E	N	R
G	O	C	U	M	U	S	I	C	A	L	S	R	R	D
L	H	E	S	T	R	I	P	U	D	N	A	T	S	S

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Actor, Afire, Allen, American, Awards, Bodies, Call Me Kat, Carpet, Cool, Emmy, Evidence, Gift, Grace, Heap, Hearts, Help, Hero, Horror, Kids, Life, Lived, Lives, Lonnie Garr, Love, Madhouse, Mangus, Misadventures, Mischief, Moon, Moving, Musicals, Peggy Ann, Pink, Ranch, Range, Reba, Singer, Ski Patrol, Sordid, Special, Stand-up, Story, Trip, Well, Whoa, Will

Yesterday's Answer: Kayak

Treasuries 27, 29, 31 and 33 through 49 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Chargers reach playoffs, beat Foles, overmatched Colts, 20-3

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—The Los Angeles Chargers tried to keep their postgame playoff celebration private.

No such luck. After shaking hands and walking off the field in Indianapolis, players jogged through a tunnel to blaring music, high-fives and hugs and headed into a first-time locker room scene for many of these Chargers — a playoff party.

Austin Ekeler scored on two 1-yard runs and Los Angeles clinched its first postseason berth since 2018, intercepting Nick Foles three times to beat the overmatched Colts 20-3 on Monday night.

"We're in it, now let's go win it!" one player screamed before reporters were allowed into the locker room.

The bash included second-year coach Brandon Staley handing a game ball to owner Dean Spanos, whose organization earned its second playoff spot since 2014, a little less than a year after a brutal overtime loss at Las Vegas in last season's finale game kept LA out of the postseason.

Justin Herbert threw for 235 yards and Cameron Dicker made two short field goals for the Chargers (9-6), who won their third straight after getting the help they needed this weekend from Las Vegas, Miami, New England and the New York Jets. When all four lost, the Chargers simply needed a win to clinch a playoff spot, and they did their part.

"It's been a while," receiver Keenan Allen said after catching 11 passes for 104 yards, his sixth straight 100-yard game on the road. "The playoffs are never guaranteed, so when you get in, it feels good. Now the season starts."

AP

Los Angeles Chargers' Austin Ekeler (30) runs in for a touchdown during the first half of an NFL football game against the Indianapolis Colts, Monday, Dec. 26, 2022, in Indianapolis.

Indy (4-10-1) lost its fifth straight under interim coach Jeff Saturday, though this was a more ho-hum defeat than the previous two, when it gave up 33 fourth-quarter points to Dallas and blew a 33-0 halftime lead at Minnesota.

Foles, making his first Colts start, squandered two first-quarter scoring chances by throwing picks, wound up getting sacked seven times and went 0 for 10 on third down.

As usual, though, Indy's third starting quarterback of the season was only part of the problem.

"We started out, thought we had some shots early but obviously the turnovers hurt you and dissuade you to keep doing it," Saturday said. "We ran the ball well, but when it's second-and-14, it's hard to catch back up. I thought we ran the ball effectively but couldn't stick with it."

Herbert also struggled early until Ekeler scored the first points of the game with his short TD run midway through the second quarter.

The Colts took advantage of two personal foul calls that led to the ejection of Pro Bowl safety Derwin James to drive for their only score of the game, a 46-yard field goal by Chase McLaughlin.

But that was it for the Colts. Dicker's two kicks made it 13-3, and Ekeler's second scoring run sealed the victory.

Ekeler had 18 carries for 67 yards, became the fourth player in 15 years to score at least 15 TDs in back-to-back seasons and needs one more catch to post the sixth 100-catch season by a running back in league history.

While Herbert went 24 of 31 and his three-game streak of 300-yard games ended, the numbers didn't matter. The win did.

"It was tough to lose to the Raiders at the end (last year)," Herbert said. "The guys in that locker room deserve this. So it'll be exciting to have that opportunity."

Foles was 17 of 29 for 143 yards and threw his final interception in the third quarter. The Super Bowl MVP after the 2017 season with Philadelphia was sacked seven times in his first NFL start since Dec. 26, 2021, with Chicago.

FUTURE PLANS

The Colts have already fired offensive coordinator Marcus Brady and coach Frank Reich and have benched quarterback Matt Ryan twice. Ryan was inactive behind Foles and backup Sam Ehlinger on Monday night.

Team owner Jim Irsay addressed the future of his organization during an interview that aired on ESPN's pregame show. Irsay said Saturday will be a candidate to keep the job next season.

"I will go into it open-minded, and I will be looking for the best direction for us to win," Irsay said. "Jeff I believe is an outstanding candidate so, obviously, he's competitive for that. Chris Ballard will be our general manager and the quarterback, it's very much up in the air right now on what direction we'll be going."

SHORT RETURN

James returned after missing two games with a quadriceps injury, but he didn't even make it through the first half.

Two plays after being called for a facemask when Michael Pittman Jr.'s helmet came off, James was flagged for hitting a defenseless receiver with the crown of the helmet and was ejected with 5:18 to play. The hit sent Colts receiver Ashton Dulin to the locker room, and Dulin was eventually ruled out with a concussion.

Staley said James also entered the concussion protocol, adding that the helmet-to-helmet hit was unintentional.

"He made an aggressive play but he didn't intentionally go for the helmet," Staley said.

Randy Gregory, Oday Aboushi suspended 1 game for punches

NEW YORK (AP)—Broncos linebacker Randy Gregory and Rams offensive lineman Oday Aboushi were each suspended one game for exchanging punches following Los Angeles' 51-14 win over Denver on Sunday.

NFL Vice President of Football Operations Jon Runyan issued the suspensions Monday for violations of unsportsmanlike conduct and unnecessary roughness rules, specifically those which prohibits "striking, swinging at, or clubbing the head, neck, or face of an opponent with the wrist(s), arm(s), elbow(s) or hand(s)."

Gregory will miss the Broncos' game at Kansas City on Sunday and Aboushi will sit out the Rams' game against the Los Angeles Chargers. Aboushi and the Rams will appeal his suspension, coach Sean McVay said.

In letters to the players, Runyan wrote: "As you were walking toward a group of teammates, coaches, and media, you both stopped and swung at each other's head and/or neck. Your aggressive conduct could have caused serious injury and clearly does not reflect the high standards of sportsmanship expected of a professional."

Gregory, who threw the first punch, declined to discuss it after the game except to say, "Y'all want to know if I hit him in the mouth, I did."

Gregory also lost his cool during the game, throwing his helmet after the Broncos fell behind by three touchdowns in the second quarter and later hitting quarterback Baker Mayfield in the head in the fourth quarter.

Gregory and Aboushi exchanged words during the postgame handshakes between the teams and Gregory threw a punch at Aboushi's helmet. Aboushi reciprocated before teammates separated them.

Both will be eligible to return to their active roster on Jan. 2.

Aboushi has started four games and played extensively in two others since signing with Los Angeles in September. The nine-year NFL veteran played all but one snap against the Broncos, adding veteran stability to a line that has been decimated by injuries.

"Personally, I don't think Oday was in the wrong," Rams right tackle Rob Havenstein said Monday. "He got hit first, tried to walk away on several occasions, from what it looks like and from what I saw. He is and he should appeal it and go from there. I don't think it was fair to have the same sentence for what happened. I think the video is pretty clear. He was walking away and he was being pursued. ... He's kind of getting the raw end of the deal, but we'll see if this thing gets made right."

Gregory has been suspended several times by the NFL, including 14 games in 2016 for violations of the league's substance abuse policy and the entire 2017 and 2019 seasons for multiple violations. Other suspensions include two games in 2018 and six in 2020.

Dolphins QB Tua Tagovailoa in concussion protocol again

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. (AP)—Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa has returned to the NFL's concussion protocol, Miami coach Mike McDaniel said Monday.

Tagovailoa was experiencing symptoms when he met with team doctors Monday, though McDaniel said it is unclear if Tagovailoa was concussed in Sunday's 26-20 loss to Green Bay.

Tagovailoa appeared to bang his head on the ground when he was tackled in the second quarter against the Packers, but he never left the game and was not evaluated for a concussion.

"As far as the game was concerned, no one recognized anything with regard to any sort of hit. I can't really tell you exactly what it was," McDaniel said, adding that he got the news Monday afternoon.

The concussion protocol is enacted whenever a player reports concussion-related symptoms, even if he isn't certain to have a concussion.

There is no set timetable for exiting the protocol, so Tagovailoa could potentially play in Sunday's pivotal game at New England if he advances through the NFL's five-step process and is cleared.

Teddy Bridgewater will practice this week with the first team, but McDaniel said it is too early to name a starter for Week 17.

"That's one of the reasons you go and aggressively pursue a player like Teddy Bridgewater," McDaniel said.

If Tagovailoa did suffer a concussion, it would be his second this season.

He entered the concussion protocol after taking a scary hit that knocked him unconscious during Miami's Sept. 29 game at Cincinnati. He was stretchered off the field and returned in Week 7.

Tagovailoa took another hard hit four days before the Cincinnati game during a win over Buffalo. He appeared to show concussion symptoms but was evaluated and stayed in the game. The NFL later changed its concussion protocol to mandate that any player who shows possible concussion symptoms — including a lack of balance or stability — sit out the remainder of a game.

The injury comes at a challenging time for Miami (8-7), which has lost four straight to fall to the bottom of the AFC playoff field.

"This is something that we have all of our fortunes ahead of us," McDaniel said, "so it's up to us to choose what we do with all the past experiences, move on to the next game."

Irving, Durant lead Nets past Cavs for 9th straight win

CLEVELAND (AP)—Kyrie Irving and Kevin Durant each scored 32 points and the Nets extended their longest winning streak since moving to Brooklyn to nine games with a 125-117 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers on Monday night.

The Nets withstood a sensational 46-point performance by Darius Garland, who single-handedly kept the Cavs close in the fourth.

Brooklyn has won 13 of 14 and is beginning to look like an NBA title contender.

T.J. Warren added a season-high 23 points for the Nets, who handled one of the teams they're chasing in the Eastern Conference standings after beating Milwaukee by 18 last Friday.

Durant moved past Tim Duncan (26,496) into 15th place on the career scoring list.

Irving made a season-high seven 3-pointers — and two key free throws with 41.1 seconds left — while being booed nearly every time he touched the ball by fans who cheered him during six seasons with Cleveland.

AP

Brooklyn Nets guard Kyrie Irving (11) drives against Cleveland Cavaliers guard Donovan Mitchell (45) during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Dec. 26, 2022, in Cleveland.

Clippers 142, Pistons 131, OT

In Detroit, Paul George scored 32 points and Los Angeles overcame a 14-point deficit in the final 3:34 of regulation to beat Detroit in overtime.

Terance Mann hit a tying jumper with five seconds left in the fourth quarter to cap a closing 16-2 run for the Clippers, who trailed 126-112 with 3:34 remaining. Los Angeles then outscored the Pistons 14-3 in the extra period.

Ivica Zubac added 12 points and 15 rebounds for Los Angeles, which has beaten Detroit eight straight times. The Clippers had seven players score in double figures.

Bojan Bogdanovic led Detroit with 23 points, including the Pistons' only field goal of the last eight minutes. Isaiah Stewart added 21 points for NBA-worst Detroit.

Heat 113, Timberwolves 110

In Miami Max Strus scored 19 points, Kyle Lowry added 18 points and nine assists, and Miami got back to .500 by holding off Minnesota.

Orlando Robinson scored 15 points and Tyler Herro had 14 for the Heat (17-17), who were without Jimmy Butler (ankle) and Bam Adebayo (illness).

Anthony Edwards led all scorers with 29 points for the Timberwolves (16-18). Naz Reid had 21 points and 10 rebounds.

Rockets 133, Bulls 118

In Chicago, Kevin Porter Jr. scored a season-high 36 points and Houston used a 17-1 run in the third quarter to beat Chicago, snapping a five-game losing streak.

Alperan Sengun added 25 points and Jalen Green had 24 for the Rockets, who scored the first 10 points of the game but blew an 18-point lead before their third-quarter spurt.

DeMar DeRozan scored 31 for the Bulls, who won their previous three games. DeRozan passed George Gervin for 44th place on the career scoring list with 20,727 points.

Pelicans 113, Pacers 93

In New Orleans, Naji Marshall scored a career-high 22 points, Jonas Valanciunas had 20 points and 12 rebounds, and short-handed New Orleans extended its winning streak to three games by beating Indiana.

CJ McCollum added 19 points for the Pelicans, who were missing top scorer Zion Williamson along with Brandon Ingram, Herb Jones and Trey Murphy III.

Rookie guard Bennedict Mathurin led the Pacers with 15 points in 22 minutes off the bench. Myles Turner scored 14.

Spurs 126, Jazz 122

In San Antonio, Devin Vassell had 24 points, Keldon Johnson added 21 and San Antonio fended off Utah in the final minutes.

The Spurs led 121-110 with 2 1/2 minutes remaining. The Jazz scored seven points in 33 seconds, but could not complete the comeback.

Lauri Markkanen had 32 points and Jordan Clarkson added 25 for Utah.

Clarkson's 3-pointer cut it to 123-120 with 30.1 seconds left, but Tre Jones tossed in a floater 23 seconds later to seal the victory.

Jones had 11 points and Jakob Poeltl scored 16 for San Antonio.

Trail Blazers 124, Hornets 113

In Portland, Ore., Jusuf Nurkic scored 27 points, including a career-high five 3-pointers, to go with 14 rebounds and six assists as Portland defeated Charlotte.

Jerami Grant led all scorers with 32 points for Portland. Damian Lillard had 17 points and nine assists on a night when he was honored for becoming the leading scorer in Trail Blazers history.

LaMelo Ball paced the Hornets with 25 points.

Portland trailed by 14 in the second quarter but Nurkic sparked the turnaround, finishing with 21 points, 10 rebounds and four assists after halftime.

Popovich, Parker, Nowitzki, Wade among Hall of Fame nominees

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

Gregg Popovich has been at the Hall of Fame enshrinement ceremony many times over the years, always there to show support for someone on the stage.

Next year, he may be there in a different capacity.

The NBA's all-time winningest coach — who has quietly declined overtures from the Hall in the past — is among the list of prominent first-time nominees for the 2023 class released Wednesday by the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

Also on the ballot for the first time: Dirk Nowitzki, Tony Parker, Pau Gasol and Dwyane Wade. They were all expected; Popovich was the biggest surprise on the list, since it's never been clear until now when he would allow the Hall to list him as a candidate.

"It will be an unbelievable moment, really," Nowitzki said. "I mean, to top everything that has happened here the last couple years and words and accolades that have come my way, that will be the ultimate ... to be enshrined, hopefully, with the greatest in our game ever."

Also on the nominee list for the first time: the 1976 U.S. Olympic women's team, the 1982 Cheyney University women's basketball team that became the first from a historically Black college or university to play for an NCAA title, and Miami coach Jim Larrañaga — who recently won his 700th game and took George Mason on a historic run to the Final Four in 2006.

The finalists from the North American and Women's committees for the Hall of Fame will be announced at NBA All-Star weekend in Salt Lake City on Feb. 17. The full class of Hall of Famers for 2023 will be announced at the NCAA Final Four in Houston on April 1, and enshrinement weekend will be Aug. 11 and 12 in Connecticut and the Hall's home in Springfield, Massachusetts.

It could be one of the most star-studded classes ever, particularly if Parker and Popovich go in together. Popovich has coached San Antonio to five NBA titles, four of them with Parker as the team's point guard. The other two legs of the Spurs' Big 3 from that championship era — Tim Duncan and Manu Ginobili — are already Hall of Famers.

Heat coach Erik Spoelstra will be an assistant coach on USA Basketball's team that, if it qualifies, will play in the World Cup next summer in the Philippines. The induction ceremony will take place shortly before the start of the tournament, and Spoelstra is already vowing to take a quick break from his duties on Steve Kerr's U.S. staff and be in Massachusetts for the big event.

"I can't wait for it because we all know how Dwyane is," Spoelstra said. "He's going to throw a party that's going to be one for the ages."

The 1976 U.S. women's team and the Cheyney team will be considered by the women's veterans direct-elect committee. There are also 12 candidates that will be reviewed by the international direct-elect committee, 26 candidates to be considered by the contributor direct-elect committee, and 44 candidates for the veterans direct-elect committee — including longtime NBA coach Paul Silas, who died earlier this month.

TEAM

From Page 20

was also spearheaded by team captain Andrei Chavez, jingled their way to first place with a time of 1:31.04; they also won the 39th Island Relay.

Chavez said that this year's race was a good one, although, "It was actually a bit hard because the road is wet so it was hard to get a good grip. But, it was a good one, though it was very tiring this year."

She said in the beginning, "Agape was leading first and then it was a 100-meter lead for Agape… so we had to catch up, and then we caught up so we slowly had to keep that lead for the rest of the race."

Tang, a runner from Marianas High School's Run Club, said that the race "was good. The weather was good. I thought it was going to rain, but it was clear… just a bit of a sprinkle."

When asked how it was to run with soccer players, Tang said that it was "fun. They're all very fast."

This year's race also included Agape Torch Bearers 1, Agape Torch Bearers 2, #Beastmates, Baby Got Track, Buns&Guns, Buns&Guns-Dos, DMSTottots, Geckos Run For Their Breakfast, Gemini's Rising, Happy Go Runners, Rex's Team, Run Saipan Alpha, Run Saipan Bravo, Run Saipan Pacemakers, Run Saipan Silent Knights, Run Saipan AJA, Saipan Paddling Club, Sleighers, Spaeth Force, U.S. Army 9th MSC Flag, US Army CNMI Flag, U.S. Army United States Flag, Team Santa 2022 Open, Team Taffy, Thisiswhatiwanttodoonxmaseve, and Yuletide Yinzers.

Edward Dela Cruz Jr., president of Run Saipan, thanked NMA, Department of Public Safety, volunteers, along with the event's sponsor, Marpac "for always supporting and sponsoring the island relay by providing amazing raffle prizes to the public."

GUALO

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while Garapan, which lost its seventh game in seven tries, was led by the 32 points of Noah Deleon Guerrero.

Kagman, meanwhile, nipped San Antonio, 39-45, in the women's division to improve to 4-2. They were led by the 24 of Kaia Travilla, while the now 1-6 San Antonio got 21 points from promising Azriel Fatialofa.

Gualo Rai 70 – Aldan 15, Garcia 13, Padayao 11, Naraja 8m Sasamoto 7, Ohane 6, Peters 5, Cepeda 3, Pangelinan 2.

Navy Hill 56 – Eugenio 24, Viana 7, Garcia 7, Sanchez 7, Caerl 4, Xue 3, Laxamana 1.

Scoring by halves: 33-20, 70-56.

DAVID

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with six, and RBI champion with 19.

Erica Tenorio was the batting champion with an average of .720; Emi Oiterong was the run scoring champion with 21; while Kiana Camacho and Mardina Kaipat were the doubles champions with six each.

Felisa Brel was the strikeout champion with 40.

Team Sufa and the Queens of Diamonds were the pennant champions, while Tokahao and Hotshots were the runner-up pennant champions. Third place went to Man Amigos and Lady Eagles.

Asahi and Kosebakl received the Sportsmanship Award.

41st Annual Christmas Island Relay

LEIGH GASES

Team Santa's Pony Tang, Nolan Ngewakl, Andrei Chavez, Zhixiang Lin, and Markus Toves pose with their gold medals in the awarding ceremony of Northern Marianas Athletics' 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay held last Saturday.

LAO ZHANG

Run Saipan members pose for a photo after Northern Marianas Athletics' 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay at the Last Command Post last Saturday.

Teams and runners pose for a photo after Northern Marianas Athletics' 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay at the Last Command Post last Saturday. LAO ZHANG

LAO ZHANG

A relay team, led by Run Saipan member Simon Necesito, center, runs through the finish line in Northern Marianas Athletics' 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay at the Last Command Post last Saturday.

LAO ZHANG

The Agape Torchbearers team race through the finish line in Northern Marianas Athletics' 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay at the Last Command Post last Saturday.

LAO ZHANG

Team Santa Open 2022 runs to the finish line in Northern Marianas Athletics' 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay at the Last Command Post last Saturday.

LEIGH GASES

#Beastmates poses for a photo after Northern Marianas Athletics' 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay at the Last Command Post last Saturday.

LEIGH GASES

Agape Youth 1 won third place in the youth division of Northern Marianas Athletics' 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay at the Last Command Post last Saturday.

Chargers reach playoffs, beat Foles, overmatched Colts, 20-3

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41st Annual Christmas Island Relay

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Team Santa slays Christmas Island Relay anew

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Team Santa slayed the competition after coming in first yet again in the youth division of the Northern Marianas Athletics' 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay last Saturday.

Four supremely conditioned soccer players—Andrei Chavez, Zhixiang Lin, Nolan Ngewakl, Marcus Toves—and runner Pony Tang dominated the 13.7-mile long course that spanned from Pacific Islands Club Saipan to the Last Command Post in Marpi with a time of 1:25:13.

In second place was Agape Youth 1 with a time of 1:27.05 and third place went to Agape Youth 2 with a time of 1:36.28.

Raffy Cai, Daniel Song, Jacky Liu, Daniel Yang, and John Chen made up Agape Youth 1, while Steve Yang, James Fan, Juke Chen, Jeshurun He, and Emma Pang completed the Agape Youth 2 team.

Last year's 40th Christmas Island Relay, Team Santa that

See TEAM on Page 18

LAO ZHANG
Team Santa runs into first place of the youth division with a time of 1:25.13 in the Northern Marianas Athletics' 41st Annual Christmas Island Relay held last Saturday.

Gualo Rai still unscathed in boys 18

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Gualo Rai won its fifth straight game in the boys 18 division of the 2022 Marianas Village Pride Basketball League last Dec. 18 at the Gillette Multi-Purpose Center.

Lucio Aldan scored 15 points, Elijah Garcia added 13, and Craig Padayao submitted 11 in Gualo Rai's 70-56 victory over Navy Hill in the last game before the Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation-organized league went on Christmas break.

Gualo Rai left the conclusion of the game beyond doubt after racing to a 33-20 at the half and then coasted to victory, while giving the third loss in five matches for Navy Hill, which was led by the 24 markers of Nyrel Eugenio.

In the boys 13 match earlier, Finasisu raised its record to 3-4 after beating Garapan, 56-47. Leon Duenas paced the winners with 18 points,

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MARK RABAGO
Gualo Rai's Craig Padayao pump-fakes Tanapag's Frankie Satur in their previous game in the boys 18 division of the 2022 Marianas Village Pride Basketball League at the Gillette Multi-Purpose Center.

David, Camacho named Finals MVPs

LEIGH GASES
Sufa's Audie Maratita, middle, was the 2022 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association men's division regular season MVP.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

A pair of pitchers were named Finals MVPs of the 2022 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association during the awards ceremony after the championship games last Dec. 18 at the Dandan Softball Field.

George David, of men's division champion Tokahao, got the nod for the Finals MVP, while Queens of Diamond's Bert Camacho won the same award after leading her team to the women's division tiara.

Bert Camacho was also named the ERA champ with a 2.29 ERA in the regular season.

Men's division

The regular season's leading pitcher in the men's division was Joe "Openg" Celis who was named the ERA champ with 4.35, while Dominic Hideo was the strikeout champion with 44.

The men's batting champion was Sufa's Audie Maratita with a batting average of .717. He was also the home run champion with 14, which was tied with Eric Palacios; Maratita also took home the men's division regular season MVP.

Jeff Cruz was the runs scored champion with 36; Tim Wesley was the doubles champion with 14; Lefty Shiro and Mike Tomokane were the triples champions with six each; and Eric Palacios was the RBI champion with 48.

Women's division

In the women's division, Kiana Aldan was handed the regular season MVP as she took home the championships in three batting categories. She is the triples champion with three, home run champion

See DAVID on Page 18

LEIGH GASES
Queens of Diamond pitcher Bert Camacho was the Finals MVP of the women's division of the 2022 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association.